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BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No 12

A REMARKABLE VOYAGE
or The Fortunes of
Wandering Jack



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BRAVE & BOLD

A Different Complete Story Every Week

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A REMARKABLE VOYAGE:

OR,

The Fortunes of Wandering Jack.

BY CAPTAIN GEOFF HALE.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE OFFER.

"Adieu, François! Adios, Pepo!"

Waving his hand to two grimy-looking sailors at the steamer's rail, Jack Rogers ran lightly down the gangway plank.

Both foreigners called out questioningly, each in his own language. Jack responded with an ease and a fluency equal to their own.

A tall, well-dressed gentleman standing on the wharf took a cigar from his mouth and eyed Jack attentively, as the latter stood for a moment holding a well-worn traveling satchel in one hand, seemingly deciding as to his next move.

"Well, happy-go-lucky Jack," said the first officer of the steamer, who was directing the movements of some men securing the fasts, "where are you off to now? Hongkong or Honolulu—Eastport or the East Indies?"

"Haven't the slightest idea, Mr. Verril," was the careless reply. "It may be far Cathay, for aught I know. I'm a sort of fatalist—'Kismet,' or 'what is to be will be,' as the Turks say."

"Well, good luck to you, my lad, wherever you go."

"Thanks, and good-by, sir. Tell Captain Small I shall never forget his kind courtesy toward a sort of vagabond."

The speaker was evidently no vagabond. The upright, athletic

carriage and bright face, full of energetic purpose, told that at a glance. And the tall gentleman, who, in his way, was no mean judge of character, nodded to himself.

"He'll do," he muttered.

Jack was turning as the stranger touched him on the shoulder.

"A sailor, young fellow?" he asked, somewhat brusquely, though Jack's attire hardly suggested a maritime following. A sort of jockey cap sat jauntily on his crisp, dark hair. He wore no vest—only a short "reefer" of foreign make and material over a French flannel shirt, tweed trousers and light canvas shoes, all of which had seen considerable service.

Jack's negative was briefly emphatic.

"You're fairly good-looking," he was saying to himself the while, "but your mustache is dyed and your eyes too near together."

For I may say, in passing, that Jack Rogers was a judge of human nature in his way.

The stranger glanced at the steamer's name—the *Brazil*.

"From South America, eh? But you are"—he hesitated—"you are—"

"A cosmopolitan," supplied Jack, gravely. "Any more questions?"

The tall gentleman bit his lip. Jack's tone was carelessly respectful—nothing more.

BRAVE AND BOLD.

Evidently, for a young fellow of seventeen or thereabouts, he had plenty of independence.

"Only one," he said, after a brief pause, during which Jack stood eying him sharply, "and—mind you, I have a purpose in asking."

"Most people do," murmured Jack.

But his interlocutor went on:

"Something the steamer's officer said just now seemed to connect you with a circus. Are you?"

"I was. With Bent's international. They came to financial grief in Valparaiso, and left a dozen of us stranded there. So I got a chance to work my passage to 'Frisco in the steamer."

"Um. You know something about horses, probably?"

"Yes."

Jack did not add, as he might have, that when he was only nine years old he had driven a span of ponies, and ridden a colt in training for the Derby races, or that on the circus posters he had been mentioned as "Jacques, the Equestrian Prodigy and Athletic Marvel."

"And your name is——"

"I call myself John Rogers. Most people say 'Jack.'"

"You call yourself, eh? Then that isn't your name, of course. But it don't matter. Here's my card."

On a bit of pasteboard Jack read:

PACIFIC CLUBHOUSE.

No. — Davis St."

"A Rundel.

"You are Mr. Rundel, I presume?"

"The same, at your service." And Mr. Rundel made a half-mocking bow. "Now I'll explain. My general utility man, Carter, has taken to bad ways—liquor and opium, both—I've got to bounce him. And I'm looking for some one to fill his place at fifty dollars a month. Do you want the chance?"

Though considerably astounded at the abruptness of the offer, Jack was too much a man of the world to let this be seen.

"What are the duties?"

"Principally to drive, and accompany my half-sister, Pearl, on her horseback rides. I have a man to take care of the horses. Rest of the time you'll be expected to stay around the clubhouse."

There was something about it that Jack could not understand. Why should such a chance be offered to him—a perfect stranger?

As though reading his thoughts, Mr. Rundel went on:

"I heard you call yourself a fatalist. Well, so am I one; and somehow I've got the idea there's a sort of destiny in my running across you just as I have. Anyway, I've taken a fancy to your looks. Come, now, what do you say?"

Now Jack had just sixty-seven cents in the world. He did not know a soul in the city, and employment of some kind he must have.

"I haven't any recommendations—and I won't wear a livery. I've played quite a good many parts, but never that of—a servant."

Jack threw up his handsome head, involuntarily, as he said this last.

Mr. Rundel uttered a short laugh.

"Recommendations? Neither have I. And for the other thing, you can wear what you please—so is it a bargain?"

"I'll try it a week," returned Jack, suddenly.

"Very good."

Mr. Rundel penciled a few words on the back of the card he had handed Jack.

"I'm trying to hunt Carter up, or I'd go back to the house with you. But Davis Street leads off Montgomery—any one will show you where the Pacific is. Tell the servant to take this card to Miss Pearl. She'll arrange matters. By-by—see you later."

With a brief nod Mr. Rundel turned, and after a moment's hesitation walked toward the end of the wharf, where a handsome, sharp-bowed vessel was lying at a quay berth.

"A curious place to look for his missing man, Carter," was Jack's not unnatural thought. But dismissing it as a matter that did not concern him, he made his way up from the busy wharf into the crowded streets.

CHAPTER II.

AN OPIUM DEN.

Jack did not notice that he had turned into Sacramento Street till the increasing number of Chinamen, and signs of Chinese occupancy on every side, told him he was going wrong. There was no policeman in sight. The few Europeans he met were swaggering roughs of the "hoodlum" order, who seemed to have drifted into the Chinese quarter, in the hopes of kicking a row—judging from their aggressive bearing toward the group of Celestials who shrank away at their approach.

Jack stopped on a corner and looked about him. It was exactly as though he had been suddenly set down in one of the commoner streets of Pekin or Shanghai.

The felt-shod Chinamen scuffling along with baskets suspended at the end of a bamboo, or standing in twos and threes at the entrance of the narrow courts and alleys, had a sort of sinister look in the dim light cast by the feebly flickering street lamps.

"I tell you, Wah Lee, I've got to get back to Davis Street. Rundel is growing cranky these days, and if I'm out a night there's the deuce to pay."

Davis Street—Rundel? Had he indeed stumbled upon the very man whose place he was to fill? The voice which had suddenly reached Jack's ear came from a basement "dive" in the crazy corner building where he stood. And apart from other considerations, relieved that a probable fellow-countryman was at hand, Jack, without stopping to think of possible risk, ran lightly down a flight of steps leading to a cellar-like apartment beneath the street.

"Hi-e-e-e-eh!"

The high-pitched exclamation proceeding from a fat Chinaman at the further side of the dimly-lighted room, seemed not only an ejaculation of surprise, but a sort of warning signal as well.

For another Celestial arose from a stool, and closing the door through which Jack had entered, dropped a heavy oak bar across it; then coolly backing up against the door, he thrust a lean hand

inside the folds of his blouse in a manner suggestive of some concealed weapon ready to be produced—and used—at a moment's notice.

"Don't be frightened, young fellow," said the voice of the European he had first heard.

"They don't mean you any harm. It's only a way Chinamen have when a stranger comes in sudden on them without presenting his credentials."

"I'm not in the least alarmed," was Jack's cool reply.

And, indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that Jack Rogers hardly seemed to know what fear was.

Straining his eyes as they became a little accustomed to the half obscurity, Jack saw, through a reek of peculiar-smelling smoke, that the speaker was sitting at the opposite end of the room, holding what Jack saw at a glance was a pipe for opium smoking.

"Smokee, Caltel?" grunted the Chinaman.

And, recognizing the substitution of "l" for "r" peculiar to Americanized Chinese, Jack knew that the man to whom the question was put could be no other than Carter, as he had at first suspected.

"I've lost my way," he said. "Standing on the corner above, I heard you speaking. If you're going back to Davis Street, I wish you'd let me accompany you."

The two Chinamen listened with stolidly impassive faces. Carter eyed Jack curiously.

"Certainly," he returned, after a momentary hesitation—"only you'll have to wait a bit. Now I'm here I might as well hit the pipe—eh, Wah Lee?"

Wah Lee grunted as though he had known all along how it would be.

Carter rolled into one of the four wooden bunks which were built at the side of the room and silently extended the pipe-bowl, the orifice of which was hardly larger than a small marble, to the fat Chinaman. Then he spoke:

"Get away from the door, Sam. This young fellow is all right; he's a friend of mine."

"Come to an anchor on the stool here—what shall I call you? Jack? Very good. You don't do this sort of thing, I suppose. No. That's where you're right; but I can't live without it now."

No more attention was paid to Jack's presence. Sam shuffled to an empty bunk and lit his own pipe. Wah Lee did likewise. The atmosphere grew heavier and more murky with the fumes of the burning opium. Jack himself began to feel a strange dizziness; his eyes closed insensibly, and, resting his head against the wall, he subsided into a sort of half stupor.

Yet in it he seemed to be conscious that Carter was talking in his dreams:

"Poor Miss Pearl! I wish I had the courage to tell you the truth—your life might be so different! But Rundel has me under his thumb."

Jack aroused himself with a sudden effort. The lamp seemed to be burning blue in the noisome atmosphere. The two China-

men, with glassy, wide-open eyes and livid features, lay motionless except for an occasional twitching of their muscles.

Carter himself muttered and moaned like one in a nightmare.

Jack could stand it no longer. The dangers of the streets of Chinatown were as nothing compared to this noisome atmosphere—these nightmare surroundings.

Staggering to his feet, Jack took up his traveling-bag and looked stupidly about him. His head was heavy and his senses bewildered by the fumes of the drug.

Instead of unbarring the door leading to the open air, Jack blundered to one at the opposite end of the room, and finding it unlocked, passed through into a corridor flagged with stone.

A sputtering lamp gave light enough, and, like one who walks in his sleep, Jack made his way for some little distance, till a portiere of thick, heavy cloth arrested his further progress.

Should he retrace his steps? And, as gradually in the cooler air of the corridor Jack's head began to clear, he decided that he wouldn't.

"I'll see the thing through," he mentally decided.

Whereupon, with a heart beating a trifle faster than its wont, Jack gently parted the portiere and stepped through, letting the folds fall behind him.

The apartment in which he found himself was spacious and high-studded.

The furniture was of the costliest description—a certain gaudiness of coloring and material seeming to characterize the entire surroundings.

This was not all, however. On a richly upholstered couch near the wall a young girl was lying—seemingly buried in as deep a slumber as the sleeping princess of the fairy tale.

"Oh, scissors!" exclaimed astonished Jack. "I have put my foot in it now!"

He had, both literally and figuratively. For, involuntarily stepping back, his foot became entangled in the fringe of a rug, and down went Jack with a crash.

He was up in an instant, but not quicker than the suddenly awakened girl.

"How did you come here?" she asked in low, liquid tones, without removing her steadfast gaze for an instant from Jack's embarrassed face.

Jack explained. And the girl nodded her small head as though quite satisfied. Possibly Jack's undeniable good looks had prepossessed her unconsciously in his favor.

She, so the little maid told Jack in tolerable English, was Weiho, Wah Lee's niece. Born in Japan, where her father held some sort of office under government. Her mother being dead, Weiho had been sent to America to be educated and learn American customs. She had an American governess, and her uncle, Wah Lee, promised she should learn to play the piano, and so on.

"Weiho show you way out. Come," she finally said. And taking Jack's brown hand in her own, little Weiho led him through two adjoining apartments furnished in a similarly luxurious manner, to a front door opening into a more respectable street.

BRAVE AND BOLD.

The distant city clocks were striking the hour of eleven when Jack found himself again in the open air, wondering how he should ever find his way without a guide from this Mongolian labyrinth of narrow, malodorous streets.

"The Pacific?" said a somewhat flashily-dressed individual, to whom Jack applied for information, "why, yes. Third on the right—around the corner of Davis Street, here. But—have you got any money in your pocket?"

The interrogatory was delivered with good-natured abruptness.

"Sixty-seven cents, only," laughed Jack, too well acquainted with the oddities of mankind to wonder at the question.

There was a half mystery about the affair, and Jack, who was somewhat of a mystery in himself, had a liking for such things. So he turned into Davis Street, and made his way as he had been told.

The Pacific was a four or five-story structure, with brown-stone front, balconied windows and granite steps, which Jack leisurely ascended, feeling meanwhile in his pocket for the card given him by Rundel.

Before touching the electric button Jack glanced at the message on the back.

"DEAR PEARL: I have engaged the bearer in place of Carter. Will explain on my return. I think this one will do. He calls himself Jack Rogers." ARTHUR."

In answer to Jack's ring a young fellow of his own age appeared. He had light hair, sleepy blue eyes and a good-natured though somewhat stolid face.

"Miss Pearl? Yes, I will gif it her. Sit you here in der hall," he said with a marked accent.

The hall was large and brilliantly lighted. At every turn of the broad stairway leading to the flights above were alcoves containing statuary in marble or bronze. Colored servants appeared and reappeared at irregular intervals from various apartments. One or two gentlemen in evening dress were admitted and shown upstairs. All was quiet and even gravely decorous. Such fragments of conversation as Jack heard were carried on in subdued tones.

The reappearance of the young German who beckoned Jack to follow him into a handsomely-furnished apartment opening from the hall, put an end to his observations for the time.

"This vas der person, Miss Pearl," he said, as a lady arose from an easy-chair, and, bowing respectfully, withdrew.

Jack caught his breath. In his wanderings he had seen many attractive girls, but Pearl Rundel was to his eyes a new revelation.

"Set down, young man."

Jack had just completed his respectful bow, when the command, in a sharp, shrill voice, sent him promptly into the nearest chair.

The speaker was an angular, middle-aged female sitting in a rocker near the center table with knitting-work in her lap.

"Are you sure you're stiddy?"

She fired the question at Jack like a pellet from a popgun.

"Aunt Maria," remonstrated Pearl, gently.

But that energetic female only sniffed.

"Because if you ain't," she went on before Jack could reply,

"I ain't goin' to trust my own dead sister's child along of you, no matter what her ha'f-brother says. I've seen enough since I've been in this house of what—"

"Aunt Maria!"

This time the young girl spoke with a certain firm decision that had its effect.

"I can't help it, Pearl," she said in a subdued manner; "and do you wonder at it when Carter, who, when he fus' come here from your father's in Injy, was the salt of the earth for soberness, and now look at him, a-ruinin' himself with drink, and opium that's even wuss."

"No, I hardly wonder," was the low reply.

Aunt Maria straightened herself up, dropped her knitting-work, and addressed herself directly to Jack:

"B'long in 'Frisco?"

"No, madam; I was born in England. But I left home when I was only nine years old. Since then I have been drifting about the world."

"Folks livin'?"

"My father was—when I last knew of him."

"Last knew of him? Land sakes! don't you send him your wages now'n then?"

An inscrutable smile flitted across Jack's handsome face.

"He is quite well able to support himself," he dryly answered.

Aunt Maria sniffed and rubbed the end of her sharp nose vigorously. But a glance from her niece warned her that she had carried her inquiry into Jack's family affairs quite far enough.

"Mr. Rundel will talk further with you to-morrow, Rogers," said Pearl, gently; "I hope you will like the place after—after you know more about it," she added, with the same little pathetic ring in her voice.

Aunt Maria had meanwhile summoned Carl, the German.

"Carl," Miss Pearl continued before the other lady could give her orders, "this is Rogers, who will take Carter's place. He will occupy your room for a few nights. You can show it to him now."

"Very goot, Miss Pearl;" and bowing himself out, Jack accompanied his new acquaintance upstairs.

CHAPTER III.

CARTER COMES BACK.

On the way to the room he was to occupy with his companion, Jack paused a moment.

From a partly-open door on the right, came the sounds of subdued talking, and an occasional low laugh. And as he glanced inquiringly at Carl, a monotonous voice called out:

"Make your game, gentlemen—make your game! Any time while the ball rolls. Rouge pard—noir gague!" (Red loses—black wins). There was a roulette game going on inside

"Ah!" said Jack.

And so expressive was the monosyllable that Carl nodded.

"You have know red-and-black before?" he remarked; "not in dis country, eh?"

"I have seen it in Hamburg," was the reply, and Carl's stolid face lightened.

"Hamburg? You vas in my vaterland? Goot, we shall be frents."

"And so this is a gambling house," thoughtfully remarked Jack, without replying.

"Dat vas it exac'ly," Carl cheerfully responded.

Then, as though a sudden thought had occurred to him:

"You know dot before you come—eh?"

"Most decidedly not," was the energetic reply. "If I had, do you think I'd been caught here?"

Carl's light-blue eyes grew large.

"But we haf not to gamble! And it vas not worse for us than Miss Pearl, mit her Aunt Jones."

"Perhaps Miss Pearl has no other home," hazarded Jack.

"Dot vos so, I s'pose. Carter say her father in East Injies does not vant her there."

"Poor girl!" was Jack's involuntary exclamation. "But who is this Carter?—where did he come from?"

Carl could not answer this. He only knew that he came to San Francisco in a small vessel in which Rundel was interested, from some part of the East Indies, and that the vessel, being seized on suspicion of opium-smuggling, Carter had been taken into Rundel's employ.

In addition, Jack learned from his communicative companion that Pearl's aunt—Miss Maria Jones—was a single lady from the East.

She had been offered a home with Rundel, when Pearl, a mere child, was left in San Francisco by her father, who went to Calcutta, where he subsequently married the widow of a native prince, reported to be enormously wealthy.

Carl himself was an orphan boy. Rundel had picked him up in the street, and from caprice, or because he promised to be useful as a sort of personal retainer, made him one of his incongruous household.

He could not read or write until Pearl, taking pity on his ignorance, taught him both accomplishments, together with such other simple aids to a future education as she could compass.

A light sleeper at best, Jack was awakened by the sound of something like a scuffle in the corridor outside. He heard a voice which he recognized as Rundel's raised as in anger, and the answering one of Carter, in half-drunken defiance.

"There, get into your room," exclaimed the former; and from certain sounds in the chamber immediately adjoining, Jack inferred that Mr. Carter was being helped to an entrance very unceremoniously.

Rundel seemed to have followed and closed the door. The partition was thin, and Jack could hear every movement and word.

Thus he knew when a match was struck—presumably for lighting the gas—and Carter's struggles, as, sitting on the edge of a

creaking bedstead, he endeavored to remove his boots, were painfully audible.

"It's the last time I go hunting the city over for you, you drunken brute!" began Rundel, angrily; "and only for fear of what your blabbing tongue lets out when you're half full of liquor or opium, I'd never have taken the trouble. But I'm done with you now. To-morrow you go aboard the *Petrel*. Old Wah Lee and I are going to send her in ballast to Calcutta soon, and you can have a mate's berth if you choose. If you don't you'll ship before the mast; but go you must, so make up your mind to that."

If Mr. Rundel was decided, so also was Carter, who emphatically and profanely vowed that he would do nothing of the kind.

"My sea-going days are over," he said, sullenly, "and if they weren't, no more opium-smuggling for me, whether it's from Hongkong or Calcutta—for, of course, you're up to your old game."

"You won't, eh?" returned Rundel, furiously. "Then, by Heaven, I'll hand you over to the authorities, and tell how—"

"Don't speak so loud. You'll wake the Dutchman in the next room," interrupted Carter.

"There's no one in the next room. Carl's asleep in one of the hall chairs. As I say, I'll blow the whole thing if you're obstinate."

"Two can play at the same game. Suppose I tell Miss Pearl the truth about her father and the money he sent by me?"

"And give yourself dead away? You'd hardly do that, I fancy, fool as you are."

An indistinct murmur was the only response. Mr. Carter was evidently growing sleepy. A peculiar silence followed.

Hardly knowing why he did so, Jack slipped out of bed and applied his eye to the keyhole of the door between the two rooms.

Rundel, standing under the gas-jet, was dropping a colorless liquid from a vial he drew from his pocket into a tumbler containing liquor.

"Come, don't go to sleep till you've taken your bromide—you'll be having the horrors in the night and wake up every one in the house again."

Thus saying, Rundel approached the bed and held the tumbler to the lips of Carter, who swallowed the potion and dropped back on his pillow.

"I wonder you don't slip some poison in, instead of the bromide," he said, drowsily; "in fact, I'm not sure you haven't—that don't taste a bit like bromide."

Rundel gave utterance to a mirthless laugh, but Jack noticed that a strange expression crossed his face, as, replacing the vial in his pocket, he stood for a moment intently watching Carter, whose heavy breathing told of profound slumber. Then turning down the gas to a pin-head point, he left the room, and Jack crept back to bed to think over what he had seen and heard.

When, the following morning, Carl, who had admitted Rundel and Carter a little after midnight, announced that the latter was not in his room, though his bed had been slept in, Jack's face showed no sign of surprise whatever.

BRAVE AND BOLD.

Rundel said carelessly that Carter had probably had one of his half-crazy spells and slipped off some time toward morning—perhaps to an opium den in search of liquor.

Carter's room was assigned to Jack, and he entered at once upon his duties, which, as Rundel had intimated, were anything but arduous.

His special business was to be at the service of Pearl, whenever she wished to ride, or take her aunt to drive. And as the days went on it was plain that he found favor in the sight of both.

One of the most beautiful of rides or drives in and about San Francisco is along Woodward Avenue and the beach thoroughfare, leading from the city to the famous Cliff House, overlooking the broad bay and ocean beyond.

Among the crowd there on a certain beautiful summer's morning was Pearl, with Jack Rogers as her escort.

A fair-faced, gentlemanly appearing young man of twenty-five or thereabouts separated himself from a little party of equestrians in the rear, and came up at a small trot.

"So glad to meet you again, Miss Rundel," he said, raising his hat graciously. "I only got back from Yellowstone Park yesterday, and was meaning to call last evening, but previous engagement prevented, don't you know?"

At the slightly drawling voice Jack started and fixed his eyes inquiringly on the speaker's face.

A flood of color rushed to the young girl's cheek as she but briefly acknowledged the greeting.

"How do you do, Lord Burham?" she said, coldly.

"Lord Burham—Mr. Rogers."

Lord Burham was understood to say, "Delighted, I'm sure," though he looked anything but overjoyed. Jack bowed carelessly, but did not seem at all overwhelmed by the honor of an introduction to a live lord.

"Shall we—er—try a canter as far as the Cliff House?" was his lordship's next question.

But Pearl said no; it was time for them to return. This with a glance at Jack, who took the hint at once. And as Lord Burham received no encouragement to accompany them, he raised his hat with a somewhat gloomy face and rejoined his party.

Wheeling their horses, the two turned back toward the city.

"Most young ladies would have been overjoyed at the honor you have just refused, Miss Pearl," remarked Jack, half laughingly.

"Possibly," returned Pearl. "But I suppose I am different."

But he only asked:

"Is this Lord Burham's first visit to America, do you know, Miss Pearl?"

"I believe so. He is said to be enormously wealthy."

"He will be when his father, Sir Richard, dies," quietly remarked Jack. "Just now he is only heir presumptive. But he is the eldest son, and Sir Richard supplies him lavishly with money."

In her surprise, Pearl failed to notice the unconscious bitterness with which her companion spoke the last words.

"Why, how do you know all this?" she cried, turning her clear eyes on Jack's slightly flushed face.

"Oh, I was born in Westchester County, not far from the Burham estates. In boyhood I have often seen Lord Burham with his father. But," continued Jack, rather hastily—perhaps to avoid further questioning—"where did his lordship make your acquaintance?"

"Through Arthur," returned Pearl, with heightening color. "He brought Lord Burham in one evening and introduced him to Aunt Maria and myself, against our wishes."

Jack muttered something uncomplimentary to Rundel, and subsided into momentary silence.

"Miss Pearl," he said, suddenly, "I've something to tell you. You've been grossly deceived all these years in being led to believe that your father in Calcutta cared nothing for you, or that he has refused you a home with himself."

Pearl turned very pale at this startling assertion.

"What do you mean?" she faltered.

Jack laid his hand on her horse's bridle rein.

"Let Selim walk a while. And let us turn into Brown's Avenue, where there are fewer people. Then read this letter."

Pearl obeyed in astonished silence. The letter extended read as follows:

"CALCUTTA, April 3, 188—

"MY DEAR PEARL: Twice in the past year I have written, asking if you were willing to come out to India and make your home with me. The only reply has been one letter from Arthur. He tells me that you desire him to say from you that, being greatly displeased at my recent marriage, you prefer remaining where you are.

"Without discussing this last matter, I wish to say that rumors have reached me of late leading me to think that Arthur is not a fit person to be intrusted with your bringing up. And at the risk of appearing harsh, I must try now to assert my parental authority. This letter will be given you by Carter, my confidential servant, who to-day sails in my schooner *Petrel* for San Francisco—a vessel in which Arthur, with a Chinese merchant, has a sixteenth interest, and for which, on arrival in San Francisco, a freight is promised.

"I request that you will return with Carter, who is thoroughly trustworthy, and have written Arthur to this effect, desiring him to make all arrangements for you and cable me by what steamer you sail. Carter brings with him £500 to provide a suitable outfit for you and pay return passage for both.

"Of course, if you deliberately refuse I can do no more. In this case the money Carter brings must be applied for the expenses of your future education, etc. I trust the £200 sent yearly for this purpose has been sufficient.

"My dear child, I do not mean to be harsh. My marriage with Princess Najada has not changed my affection for you in the least. It is as strong as when I was forced to send you from me to America in sickly childhood till you should be strong and old enough to endure this hot climate. Were I a well man I should come for you myself, but I am sadly broken in these, my late years. God bless you, my child. I shall wait word from Arthur or yourself very anxiously.

YOUR LOVING FATHER."

Pearl's conflicting emotions as she finished the letter cannot well be described. But she had early in life learned the lesson of self-repression.

"This was written three years ago," said Pearl, in a strangely steady voice; "tell me, how did it come into your possession?"

"I found it last night with some other papers of Carter's hidden away under a loose floor board in the closet."

Pearl put her hand to her forehead in a dazed sort of way.

"I am all bewildered, Jack," she said; "tell me, what does it mean?"

"It means this, Miss Pearl," he replied, gently; "in some way your half-brother induced Carter to be false to his trust. Between them both they kept back your father's letter and probably divided the money."

"But why should Arthur desire to keep me here? He dislikes me—if that I am certain."

"He probably finds the two hundred pounds sent yearly by your father quite handy," was the dry response.

"Arthur has always said," Pearl went on, with a little sob, "that father utterly repudiated and ignored me after his marriage, when, instead of that, he has been writing for me to come to him—"

And here the girl's voice broke for a moment.

"But now," she said, with a defiant ring in her voice, "now I can leave this hateful, horrible life behind me. I have a home and

BRAVE AND BOLD.

7

a father to go to. Let us get back as soon as possible, Jack; I want to tell Aunt Maria the good news."

Jack acquiesced as a matter of course, and the horses started forward in a brisk canter.

CHAPTER IV.

JACK TAKES A HAND.

Pearl, on her return from her ride with Jack, boldly taxed her half-brother with his dishonesty and treachery.

"It's a rascally piece of business, Arthur Rundel," snapped Aunt Maria, who had taken a hand in the fray immediately on being apprised of Rundel's treachery, "though it ain't any more'n I might have expected from a man that runs a gamblin' hell."

"Auntie, don't!" interposed Pearl, with a look of distress. "I have no wish to quarrel with you, brother," she said, turning to her half-brother, "but now, to end this discussion: All I ask is that you provide me with a sufficient sum to pay my passage hence to Calcutta—then I will not trouble you any more."

"And suppose I refuse?"

"Then I shall write to father and ask that he use legal means—if there is no other way to escape your tyranny."

"Very well," said Rundel, throwing off his mask; "and now, Pearl, you've spoken your mind, I'll speak mine. It don't suit my book to have you go to India—or anywhere else just at present, so I shall advance no money—and you can write your father what you please."

"Where are you going, Pearl?"

For the young girl, passing him swiftly, had opened the door and stepped into the hall.

"I am going out to get legal advice, for one thing," she returned. But Rundel sprang after her.

"You're going to your room! And remember, the servants will have orders not to let either of you two women leave this house until I give permission."

Thus saying, Rundel angrily clutched the girl's white arm with such force as to draw an involuntary cry from her lips.

Now, Jack had heard the upraised voices, and knowing pretty well what was the subject under discussion, he stepped from his own room into the corridor, just in time to see Rundel's act, and catch the words.

Every drop of blood in his body seemed to tingle in his fingers' ends.

"Let go her arm, you cowardly brute!" he angrily exclaimed.

Unconsciously releasing his hold, Rundel stared at the speaker in wrathful amazement. Up to this time Jack, though displaying an assertive independence, had always been civil and quiet spoken.

"Do you know who you are speaking to?" sternly demanded Rundel.

"To a sneak as well as a coward," said Jack.

Rundel's face grew livid with anger.

"Blast you, then, it is you who have been the cause of all this row," he said, hoarsely.

"I found the letter in Carter's room, and gave it to Miss Pearl, if that's what you're driving at," said Jack, coolly.

Carl, and one or two of the hall servants, attracted by the altercation, stood in breathless expectancy.

Rundel, who was a somewhat noted pugilist in an amateur sort of way, had, at Jack's bold speech, suddenly launched forward, with his right arm drawn halfway back, and his muscular fingers clinched.

But that Jack was no tyro, seemed plain enough, if only from the fact that his eyes never for a moment left those of Rundel, though he was perfectly conscious of the oncoming blow.

Taking a quick step backward, Jack ducked lightly, and throwing up his left fore-arm, parried cleverly, while at the same time he sent his right fist out—and up.

The blow, having considerable muscular power behind it, caught Rundel fairly under the chin with force enough not only to make his jaws rattle, but to nearly lift him from his feet!

Uttering a howl of anger, the infuriated man made a Sullivan-like rush on his younger adversary, who, gathering himself for the occasion, struck squarely and straight out from the shoulder.

"Stan' from under—der olt boy was der pay now!" gasped Carl, as Rundel measured his length on the hall floor.

"Sure, the bye has knocked the boss silly!" exclaimed Mike, the porter. "Bring some wather—or mebbe whiskey'd be bether—one of yez."

Jack looked ruefully at his own bruised knuckle.

"By Jove! I didn't mean to hit him so hard," he said. "Is he very much hurt, Carl?"

Before that youth, who was holding a tumbler to Rundel's lips after he was dragged to a sitting posture, could reply, Rundel spoke for himself.

To the unmitigated astonishment of all present his voice was composed, while so far as was compatible with his bruised jaws, he favored Jack with a smile that was childlike and bland.

"Jack," he said, "you're a trump. I didn't think it was in you. You've bested me, and that's what few sparring men in the city can do. Give me a hand to get up, will you?"

The speaker's manner and address, so entirely unlike what was looked for, struck the onlookers dumb.

Jack, a little ashamed of his ebullition as he grew cooler, stepped forward—rather cautiously, it must be admitted—and helped Rundel to his feet.

"I'm very quick-tempered, and I—forget myself, Mr. Rundel," he said—not so much in the tone apologetic as explanatory.

Rundel tossed off the remainder of the whiskey, felt a fast-gathering lump half as big as a pullet's egg on his forehead, and gave a ghastly sort of smile.

"I hope you won't forget yourself again that way," he remarked, in a tone intended to be pleasant.

Jack murmured something unintelligible and turned away—to quickly, indeed, to see the fiendish expression that flashed across Rundel's face.

"The teefi was in his eye bigger'n one woodchuck. You look out, Jack," said Carl, shaking his head as, a little later, the two met on the landing.

Before Jack could reply, the door of Pearl's chamber opened, revealing Miss Jones in the doorway.

"Jack, you come in here! Pearl and me wants to have a talk along of you," she whispered.

A command which Jack obeyed on the instant.

Pearl, looking agitated but very lovely, extended her slim, white hand, which Jack held in his own longer than seemed actually necessary.

"If I write father it will be weeks before I can hear from him," said Pearl. "And under the circumstances, I think I am justified in trying to go to him without further delay. I want you, Jack, first of all, to help me escape from this house."

Jack laughed.

"Willingly, Miss Pearl, though to tell the truth, I don't see anything to prevent you from walking out the front door and calling a cab at any time."

"That is because you do not know my half-brother as well as I. The servants—Carl excepted—are all afraid of him. Not one

BRAVE AND BOLD.

dares disobey in the smallest thing. Nothing is easier than for him to keep me a prisoner here for an indefinite time."

Jack opened his eyes rather widely. Secretly, he thought Pearl overestimated Rundel's powers of evil doing.

And then, all at once, there came the remembrance of Carter's sudden and mysterious disappearance.

"Very well, Miss Pearl, I will help you in any way you may suggest. Now, what do you propose?"

But the plan agreed was to sail on the *Petrel*, and the ladies were to be ready to go the following evening. Carl was to sail with them as a companion.

CHAPTER V.

LORD BURHAM TO THE RESCUE.

"I wisht Jack was goin' to sail along of us," said Aunt Maria.

A slight flush tinged the oval of Pearl's cheek, but she did not reply at once.

"I wish he would come," she finally responded. "The *Petrel* sails at eight, and it's five now. It will take us an hour at least to reach the vessel. And how are we going to get away from the house if Jack isn't here to help us off, as he promised?"

The maiden lady looked dubiously about the room. Two well-filled satchels were in readiness by the door. Each lady was dressed in a traveling suit. Jack had smuggled out from time to time enough clothing and necessaries for the intended voyage to fill a goodly-sized trunk, which even then was awaiting them in a stateroom on board the schooner *Petrel*, lying in the stream a cable's length distant from the Alta steamship wharf.

For, true to his threat, Rundel had given strict orders to the servants not to allow either Pearl or her aunt to leave the house without his consent, on any pretext whatever. But Jack had bid them be of good cheer. When the appointed time came he proposed seeing the two ladies through the hall door in the face of the servants, or even Arthur Rundel himself.

No strategy whatever was intended—only such muscular action as might be needed in case of active resistance. And since the little affair with Rundel, Jack's athletic prowess was looked upon with great respect by every one employed about the premises.

Half-past five and no Jack! Aunt Maria arose to her feet and grasped her umbrella as a knight of old his trusty sword.

"Somethin's happened to hinder Jack from comin'," she said, "and if we lose this chance of gettin' to your pa out'n Injy, 'tain't likely we'll have another, for we haven't got money enough betwixt us to pay our passage in no steamer. Come on, Pearl! I'm goin' through that hall door if a whole battalion of Rundels stood in the way."

Well, the case was a desperate one requiring a desperate remedy. Without a word Pearl, paler than her wont, but outwardly calm, put on her hat, and throwing her wraps over her arm took up her traveling bag.

Miss Jones attached herself to her own property, and with her sharp chin a trifle elevated led the way.

"I'm sorry, mum, but you know what Mr. Rundel's orders is—not to let the one or the other of ye's lave the house widout the word from himself."

The speaker was Mike, who firmly but respectfully met the two at the foot of the wide hall stairs, while a couple of white-coated servants paused to render assistance if need be.

"But, Michael, you forget yourself!" said Pearl, indignantly. "What right have you, or any one, to prevent us from going out?"

"It's might makes right, Miss Pearl," returned Mike, "and I'm not forgittin'; I'm rememberin'. 'Mike,' says Misther Rundel, to

me only yesterday, 'av ye let the wimmin-folks lave the house till I tell ye, I'll break ev'ry bone in yer body.' An' he's the man to kape his wurr'd."

"Oh, he is, is he?" snapped Aunt Maria, vengefully. "Now, look here, you red-headed Hibernian, stan' away from that door; do you hear?"

The fling at his carotty locks aroused Mike's ire.

"Indade and I'll not, fer any dried-up ould maid in Ameriky," he retorted. "So now—Oow-w-w! murder! take her off, some one."

For, raising the umbrella, Aunt Maria had brought it down with a tremendous thwack on Mike's head, following up the blow with two others equally severe.

"Aunt Maria! for Heaven's sake don't!" cried Pearl, greatly dismayed.

But Miss Jones' blood was fairly up.

"Stan' away from that door, I tell you!"—a thump from the umbrella emphasizing each word, as Mike, protecting his head with one hand, wildly endeavored to wrest the offensive weapon from its wielder with the other.

Suddenly a latch-key rattled in the lock, and the hall door opened, admitting Rundel, accompanied by two gentlemen in full dress. For a moment the trio stood aghast at the peculiar *tableaux*.

Pearl's heart sank within her as thus the last hope of escape seemed cut off, and even Aunt Maria seemed for the moment dismayed.

"What the devil is all this?" angrily demanded Rundel.

"It means," responded the maiden lady, finding and elevating her voice at the same time, "that this is a free country, and me'n Pearl don't mean to be kep' prisoners no longer by you, Arthur Rundel! Open that door and let us out."

"Not to-night—some other night, Aunt Maria," mockingly returned Rundel, seemingly for the moment forgetful of his two companions, whose faces were indistinguishable in the gathering twilight. "And you, Pearl, go back to your room," he went on, as one of the servants turned on the gas. "What are you thinking of?"

But the sudden illumination had revealed to Pearl in one of Rundel's companions the face of Lord Burham. With a sudden impulse she sprang to his side.

"Oh, Lord Burham," she said in a rapid undertone, "help us—do help us! My half-brother is holding us here against our will."

Now, Lord Burham, with all his faults of omission and commission, was a true gentleman.

And no sooner had Pearl thus made appeal, than he bowed and said:

"Most certainly, Miss Rundel. And you may command my services in any way you wish."

Thus saying, he coolly walked to the door and threw it open. Aunt Maria dodged through like a shot.

"Lord Burham," angrily exclaimed Rundel, stepping in front of Pearl, who was about to follow, "I'll trouble you not to interfere in my family matters."

Now, when in the least excited the young Englishman invariably affected a Lord Dundreary style of speech. Heaven only knows why, unless as a cover for the excitement itself.

"De-ah boy, stand away and allow the lady to pawss out," he drawled. And with the words he "yanked" Mr. Rundel one side with sudden force.

"Now, Miss Rundel"—and Pearl slipped through the door to the side of her aunt, who stood on the steps beckoning a distant cabman with what was left of the shattered umbrella.

Uttering an imprecation, Rundel attempted to follow.

"I wouldn't, old chappie. You're excited, don't you know, and there's a 'bobby' across the street starin' vewy hard this way."

Lord Burham, thus speaking, stepped quickly out and banged the door in the face of Rundel, who, not caring for a closer investigation on the part of the policeman, did not attempt to follow.

"Where shall I tell the fellow to drive?" politely asked Lord Burham, having assisted the rejoicing females into the cab.

"The Alta steamship wharf. And as quickly as possible, please. And, oh, Lord Burham, we are so grateful to you!"

The cabman, who had heard the response, touched his horse before Lord Burham could command a response. The cab rattled away, leaving him bare-headed on the pavement, with his monocle in one eye, the picture of bewilderment, while inside the vehicle Aunt Maria gave free vent to her joy at their escape.

Pearl said but little. Her mind was too full of conflicting emotions. Now that the important step was taken, various doubts and fears as to its wisdom began to arise.

The long voyage across the Pacific in a vessel of less than two hundred tons burden, the accommodations on board, the officering and all. For Pearl knew nothing of the *Petrel* or of Captain Benjamin Bolt, her master, excepting what had been told her by Jack, who had himself made all the arrangements for their passage.

And Jack? Could it be that anything had happened to him—perhaps through the agency of Rundel himself? Could—

"Here we be," said Aunt Maria, cutting short Pearl's anxious reflection; and in another moment the two were standing, half dazed and bewildered, near the end of the wharf, where a steamer was blowing off steam, while another was making fast with the usual bustle and confusion attendant upon similar scenes.

CHAPTER VI.

ALL ABOARD FOR INDIA.

The cabman was duly paid and dismissed.

Confused by the commotion going on about them, the two stood near the landing slip at the extreme verge of the long pier, keeping watch and ward over their traveling bags and wraps till some one from the *Petrel* should put in an appearance.

For Captain Benjamin Bolt had sent them word by Jack that a boat would come after them with a suitable person in charge; and Jack's mysterious, as well as unexpected absence, made this part of the programme as perplexing as all the rest.

Luckily they had not long to wait.

A young man in sailor's attire, having features of a Spanish cast and gleaming black eyes, hastily ascended the steps from the water's edge.

"The ladies for the *Petrel*?"

And the speaker cast a boldly admiring glance at Pearl herself, raising his cap at the same time.

"That's us, young man; what might your name be?"

Thus queried Aunt Maria in her most incisive tones.

"Manuel Blasco, the *Petrel*'s mate, at your service. This way, if it please you."

Mr. Blasco politely assisted the ladies and their luggage into the boat at the foot of the landing steps. Motioning two dark-faced sailors to push off, he took the tiller ropes, and in a few moments they were standing on the *Petrel*'s quarter-deck, where Captain Bolt received them with a certain rough courtesy which placed both immediately at their ease.

The captain was a rather jovial-looking seafarer of middle age, with a weather-beaten, good-humored face; stiff, iron-gray hair, and a peculiar habit of occasionally thinking aloud, of which, however, he was generally unconscious.

This latter peculiarity Jack had mentioned to Pearl indirectly. So, though a trifle embarrassed, she was not altogether surprised when Captain Bolt, having shown them below, remarked *sotto voce*:

"Hum; well, Bolt, you're in luck far as passengers are concerned. Miss Pearl's han'some as a picture, but for such a battered old hulk as I be, her aunt's more to my taste. Kind of slim-sparr'd and figger-head a bit weather-beaten, but a good, clean run and—"

"Eh?" sharply interrupted Aunt Maria, poking Captain Bolt in the ribs with the umbrella-handle. "Why, bless the man! he's dreaming."

"Exactly, mum," returned Captain Bolt, briskly, "it's the unusual sight of youth"—here he bowed to Pearl, who with difficulty kept her countenance—"and beauty"—turning to Aunt Maria, whose face was a study—"aboard the *Petrel*, which ain't accustomed to such combinations."

Having thus delivered himself, Captain Bolt threw open their stateroom door with a flourish.

"Make yourselves to home, ladies, and if you want anything, sing out for the stooard," he said, and took his departure.

Well, as it afterward appeared, Captain Bolt had given up his own quarters to his passengers, and the *Petrel* having been built for a very wealthy San Franciscan as a pleasure yacht, the main stateroom was commodious and very handsomely finished in rosewood and mahogany, with every convenience.

A trunk containing everything needful for the voyage stood in the room, while a beautiful bouquet of flowers, probably provided by Jack's thoughtfulness, ornamented the little stationary table.

There were two handsomely curtained berths, with drawers beneath, a swinging-lamp, books in a case, and a door at one end opening into a tiny lavatory.

"I wonder how soon the vessel sails," observed Pearl, as her aunt, with her accustomed energy, began stowing away their various belongings.

"Don't know," was the abstracted reply. "What a fine figger of a man Cap'n Bolt is, Pearl—and then he's so observin' and so perlite," said Aunt Maria, with what in a less strong-minded female might have been termed a simper.

But Pearl was not paying much attention. The sound of rattling dishes, not very far off, suggested the presence of the steward—he might know at least whether Jack had been on board that afternoon, which the freshness of the flowers certainly suggested. Stepping to the door, she called:

"Steward!"

"Yes, Miss Pearl."

"Why, it's Carl!" cried Pearl, in undisguised amazement; but the face of the Teutonic youth expressed no emotion whatever.

"Yas, it wos me. You don't s'pose I shay to der clubhouse when you and Miss M'ria go heim? I come to 'Frisco cabin-boy in der Sunderland, and know der steward bizness, so Cap'n Bolt gif me der chance on Jack's recommend. Only if Jack did go I like it better. But he say no—he half not der money, and dot settle it."

"But where is Jack?" asked Pearl and her aunt, in a breath, as Carl, finishing his discourse, stood with his hands folded under his apron, calmly regarding his astonished auditors.

Carl's blue eyes opened a trifle wider than their wont.

Where he is? I s'pose he come with you, of course. He tell me las' thing when he leaf ter flowers this mornin', that he pring you aboard hisself, and he look as if his heart vos break to say you 'good-py.'"

BRAVE AND BOLD.

The voice of Captain Bolt on deck, calling to his first officer, prevented immediate reply.

"We can't get off before the morning tide, Mr. Blasco," he was saying. "I just had word from old Wah Lee that his niece, little Weiho, will be aboard, bag and baggage, in a couple of hours. She's goin' back to Japan by steamer from Calcutta. And I've got the promise of a man to make up the complement of the crew, if the boarding-master can get hold of him and he ain't too drunk to be put aboard along about midnight. So have everything ready for heavin' up by daybreak when the pilot comes alongside, and then let the men get supper. I don't see, though, where that young feller Jack is. S'posed, of course, he'd come with the wimmin folks. I wanted to say good-by to him the worst kind."

CHAPTER VII.

JACK'S DISAPPEARANCE.

On the morning of the day set for the release of Pearl and her aunt, Mr. Rundel was even more affable than usual.

If he had suspicions that Jack was plotting to aid and abet Pearl and Aunt Maria in any projected attempt at escaping his surveillance, he concealed them most effectually.

Early in the afternoon he called Jack to his room, where, sitting down at a writing-table, Rundel indited a brief note, which, duly sealed and addressed, he handed Jack.

"I want you to take this to a rather tough-looking place, Jack," he said, "but you won't mind that. Johnson, who you're to give the note to (no one else, mind), has an indirect interest in a certain venture aboard the schooner *Petrel*, that I'm part owner of. She sails to-night or to-morrow, and I want an answer back as soon as possible."

Chuckling at the reflection that he knew quite as much about the schooner's sailing time as Rundel himself, Jack gravely put the note in his pocket and left the house.

By this time Jack had turned aside from the great main thoroughfare into Stockton Street, and thence in the direction indicated on the letter.

Well down toward the gloomy dock warehouses Jack found the place to which he had been directed.

At the head of a flight of steps leading to a basement below was a dingy transparency, on which he read:

"MARINERS' RETREAT.

"A. Johnson, Proprietor."

Descending the steps Jack entered the "Retreat" itself.

"Rather a tough-looking place—well, I should say so," was his inward thought, as he glanced about him.

The low-studded room, with its dingy wall and ceiling—the odor of liquor and tobacco—the little knots of hard-looking men scattered here and there were all suggestive of a den rather than a "Retreat."

But Jack was perfectly fearless, and moreover, his varied life had made him acquainted not only with all sorts and conditions of men, but all sorts and conditions of places.

Stepping to the bar, he addressed the heavy-featured Swede who not long before had been interviewed by Rundel.

"Mr. Johnson?"

"That's me. What do you want?"

"From Rundel," returned Jack, extending the message.

Johnson's face was as immovable as that of the Sphynx as he opened and read the letter.

"I will wait for the answer," announced Jack, leaning leisurely against the counter and vaguely wondering why Johnson, instead

of hunting up writing materials, should eye him furtively, as one who sizes up a possible adversary.

"You will wait? Very good. And will you takes somethings with me?"

"No thanks," laughed Jack; "drinking isn't in my line."

"That's right," gravely responded Johnson. "Young mens is better to keep the head level. But I will mix you one hot lemonade that shall make to curl your hair."

Jack had no objection to this, as he did not wish to appear offish. So while the proprietor was selecting a lemon, Jack stood listening to such scraps of talk as drifted to his ear from time to time.

It was evident that a comparatively well-dressed individual was something of a novelty in the Mariners' Retreat. Curious glances were cast in his direction by more than one of the seafarers at the different tables.

"Why didn't you ship in the *Petrel*, Kelly?" asked a weather-beaten old tar, renewing a conversation temporarily interrupted by Jack's entrance; and Jack pricked up his ears.

"Wid seven Malaymen in the fo'csle? Not if Kelly knows hisself," was the reply, and Kelly, who was a fair representative of the survival of the fittest from that almost extinct race of old packet sailors, tossed a glass of fiery spirits down his throat, after which he replenished his tumbler from a bottle at his elbow.

"Malaymen ain't such bad shipmates when they 'av'n't any 'bang' to chew—that is, if you keep on the right side of 'em," observed another.

"Bhang's what drives 'em crazy like, ain't it?" queried a younger sailor. "I 'member of seein' a Malay to Samarang runnin' amuck last v'yge, and they said he'd primed hisself with the stuff. He killed three wimmin and two men afore some one shot him through the head."

"I wouldn't mind the *Petrel's* Malay crew so much," observed an ancient mariner with one eye, "but there ain't money enough in Frisco to temp' me to ship in a vessel when Manuel Blasco goes mate of her."

"Is Blasco mate of the *Petrel*? Thin, it's a good job I didn't go in her, for as threue as I'm Kelly I'd cut out the heart of him before I'd bin aboard an hour—the cowld-blooded devil that he is!"

This pleasant ebullition from Kelly was received with gentle applause.

"It was him as headed the mutiny aboard the brig *Norman* when the cap'n an' mate was throwed overboard, though the cap'n's wife went on her knees to Blasco beggin' for his life."

"Ay, she went crazy the week after, and jumped over the rail in the mornin' watch."

"He was kidnapin' niggers in the South Pacific and runnin' em to the Brazils two years ago."

"From pitch and toss to cuttin' throats, Manuel Blasco is handy. And him wid the smooth tongue would charm a bird from the tree."

These flattering écomiums from as many sources had hardly ended, when Johnson touched Jack's shoulder, at the same time calling his attention to a smoking tumbler at his elbow.

CHAPTER VIII.

DRUGGED.

"Bring it in the oder room while I write the answer," said Johnson, with seeming cordiality; and Jack, not unwilling to leave such uncongenial surroundings, gladly consented, happily unconscious of the winks slyly exchanged by Mr. Johnson's customers.

Jack dropped into his chair, and sipped his hot lemonade with relish, for, though it was a mild day, the breeze from the bay was chilly.

"There was nothing to hinder you to take a nap on the lounge," Johnson said. "I am slow for writing—"

His voice, which even at first had sounded a long way off, seemed to Jack to die away into a sort of indistinct murmur.

"All right," heavily answered the drugged victim, stumbling to the lounge. "I never was so sleepy in—all—my—life. Wake me—"

* * * * *

Half an hour later a singular scene was being enacted in the same room.

Jack's literally senseless form had been denuded, and for his neat tweed suit was substituted a coarse woolen shirt and patched trousers, redolent of tar and grease.

Carroty Dan, one of Johnson's "runners," who had assisted his employer at the change of toilet, stood by the side of the lounge, with his hands in his pocket and his head a little one side, regarding the heavily sleeping victim with a sort of professional admiration.

For, not only had the matter of wearing apparel been attended to, but a marked transformation was effected in Jack's personal appearance.

For his crisp, bronze hair had been clipped to the length of a State prison convict, or a professional baseballist in the summer season. And not only this, but a thin dilution of walnut-bark stain had been applied with a sponge to his face, neck, hands, and arms, as far up as the elbow.

"Not so bad a bit of work, eh, Dan?" remarked Johnson, rubbing his hands cheerfully, as he noticed the rapt attention of his satellite.

"Right you are, boss. An' now, ain't it about time to be gettin' him aboard? Pete driv the hack up to the back door ten minutes ago."

Ten minutes later Johnson and Dan were helping what would seem to be a man dead drunk into a boat, which was quickly pulled alongside one of the anchored vessels in the stream.

A few words were exchanged between the officer of the deck and the occupants of the boat.

"He's the drunkest Malay ever I saw, Mr. Mate, but get him sobered off, he's an AI," said Dan, as, a bow-line being slipped under Jack's arms, he was half hoisted, half helped on board.

The second officer—a tall, round-shouldered man—stood at the rail, with a lantern in his hand, which he flashed in Jack's face.

"You ain't playing your old tricks of shipping a dead man, are you, Johnson?" he growled.

And, bending down, he placed his ear to Jack's lips.

"No; I see he's alive! I suppose it's some of your drugging! It's a blasted shame, anyway; but it's none of my business. Take him for'ard, and stow him in an empty bunk. Any luggage?"

Johnson had gone aft for the advance wages of the sailor he had thus shipped—showing what purported to be a bill for board, clothes and liquor, covering the entire amount, which he pocketed, and then withdrew.

Dan passed up a limp, cloth bag, with a grin.

"Here's his dunnage. Guess he's shoved his sea boots and ilskins up fer rum—leastwise, he hadn't none while he was at our place, did he, Mr. Johnson?"

Johnson answered in the negative, and the two descended into their boat.

"Blast ye for a pair of as big scalawags as there is in Frisco!"

muttered honest Mr. Farr, shaking his fist in the direction of the receding boat.

For, once upon a time, Mr. Farr, when a foremast hand, had been "shanghaied" aboard a deep-water ship, and knew how it was himself.

CHAPTER IX.

AT SEA.

An atmosphere redolent of tobacco—a whitewashed inclosure some fourteen feet square, containing eight bunks and four sea-chests. A miscellaneous assortment of rough pea-jacket and oil-clothes, hanging at one end, were swinging and swaying in unison with a jingling tin lamp pendant from a beam overhead.

Of all this Jack was vaguely conscious as he opened his heavy eyes. But whether it was a dream or unpleasant reality, he could not decide—indeed, Jack was hardly able to think at all. And, as for remembering—he had forgotten his own name, even.

Now, let me say, in passing, that I am speaking of what came under my own observation. The drug used in Jack's case, as I afterward learned, is a peculiar preparation of East Indian hemp, but little known this side of the world. It acts directly on the motors of the brain which are most nearly connected with the memory, and its effect is like that of a form of brain fever, from which the patient recovers to find—for a longer or shorter time—that his past is as utterly obliterated as the figures on a slate by the wet sponge.

Three sailors, all of whom had the olive hue of the far East, were squatted on the dirty floor, throwing dice for tobacco, thus showing the soothing effect of civilization upon the barbaric races from other lands.

"What vessel is this?" asked Jack, managing with some difficulty to find his voice.

"Peter—cannot call rest 'Merican name," returned one of the sailors, squinting obliquely up at Jack.

And then, to Jack's surprise, the man addressed him in a language he had never before heard.

"I don't understand," said Jack, shaking his head. And, sitting up in the bunk, Jack held his hands against his aching temples.

How came he in this forecastle? Where did he come from? Who was he, anyway?

The remaining sailors regarded him curiously.

"You not 'stand Malay? But you Malay, all same as us."

Jack stared at the man, but said nothing.

And then, all at once, Jack caught a glimpse of himself in a bit of broken looking-glass tacked up at the end of the bunk.

"Great heavens! What does it mean?" was the terrified exclamation that escaped Jack's lips.

A forest of bristles arose from his head. His face was a light copper color, like his hands—yes, and his wrists!

Before Jack could investigate further, the forecastle door was pushed rudely open. A lithe, muscular young man, with Spanish features, stepped in.

"Now, then, your drunk has got through, eh? One might think it time. Twenty-four hours you lay on your back, snoring like a pig! Turn out here!"

This gentle address, emphasized by an unpleasant show of white teeth, was directed to Jack, who stared at the speaker in a dazed sort of way without replying.

Yet he was vaguely conscious that it was an officer of the vessel, who, clothed with something more than brief authority, had thus spoken.

BRAVE AND BOLD.

An instinct—born of something, he could not tell what—led Jack to reply after a momentary pause:

"Ay, ay, sir."

And though his head ached fit to burst, while his legs trembled under him with weakness, Jack managed to stumble on deck.

In the rigging a couple of sailors were seizing on chafing gear, while the forestay sails were snugly stowed on the boom end, down to meet the swing and sway of the swiftly, on-rushing craft. A stout individual in the weather gangway, who Jack presumed to be the master, walked to the break of the quarter and surveyed Jack with a sort of good-natured pity.

"Well, my man, you look hard. A Portigee, eh? 'Portigee Tom,' your boarding master wrote you down on the papers. Speak English?"

Part of the captain's speech was perfectly unintelligible to Jack. But to the question itself he replied:

"Yes, sir, I speak English; and I don't think I am a Portuguese."

"By Jove! you don't talk like one! What countryman are you, anyway?"

But Jack shook his head sadly. Try as he would, he could not dissipate the mist from his mental vision.

"He isn't over the effects of his liquor yet, Mr. Blasco. Ease up on him a bit till he gets his head level. Carl!"

At the last summons, a brisk-looking young fellow appeared from the cabin.

"What was it, Cap'n Bolt?"

"Take this poor chap to the galley, and tell the cook to give him some hot coffee and grub, if he can eat it."

"All right, sir."

Mr. Blasco! Carl! Cap'n Bolt! Had he heard those names in some other stage of existence in—

And why was it, as Jack followed the steward along the reeling deck, that he seemed to recognize the names of the halyards neatly coiled on the pins? And the schooner was running under a two-reef foresail, a balance-reef mainsail, with the bonnet off the jib, while the forestay sails were snugly stowed on the boom end. How did he know this?

For Jack could not recall the four months' passage he had once made in an English schooner-yacht, where he learned to "hand, reef and steer" with the best of them, when for two weeks he had taken the second mate's place, that officer being temporarily laid by the heels.

No; he remembered nothing—absolutely nothing—of all this! Yet, strangely enough, he knew, by a sort of instinct, that he was capable of doing an able seaman's duty.

Mr. Blasco walked away. Carl beckoned Jack to the galley door.

"Fore de Lord, steward, wot's dis thing you bring here? Looks like he ain't wash him since las' v'y'ge!"

A flash of Jack's old independent spirit was struck by the colored cook's remonstrance.

"Mind your own business, Snowball! Give me some hot coffee and something to eat with it; it's the cap'n's orders," he said, sharply.

The cook, momentarily silenced, obeyed, with something like alacrity. But Carl stood stock-still, staring at the haggard, dusky-visaged sailor in mute amazement and bewilderment.

"Mein Gott in Himmel! How he speak like Jack!" he muttered.

But, though Jack plainly heard the remark, it had no meaning to him. In fact, if he thought at all, it was concerning the

savory taste of salt beef and bread, washed down with great draughts of hot coffee, that had been handed out by the cook.

And physically, the much-needed food made a new man of him. Having no past that he could by any possibility contrast with his present, Jack became, perhaps unconsciously, equal to the situation.

CHAPTER X.

JACK FORGETS WHO HE IS.

"Now, sir, I'm ready for work."

So said Jack, addressing Mr. Blasco, mate of the schooner *Petrel*, on board which vessel Jack had been "shanghaied," after being drugged at the "Mariners' Retreat."

"You speak better English than your shipmates. How is that?" was the officer's sharp response.

"I don't know, sir."

Blasco hesitated a moment. Then he said:

"Never mind. Some day you will be all right again. I give you easy times. By and by, perhaps, you may be of service to me. *Quien sabe?*" (who knows.)

That there was something under this very unusual address on the part of an officer to a foremast hand, Jack could not but see.

Yet, I hardly need say, he did not let this suspicion appear in word or look.

"There's mischief brewing, even at this early part of the voyage," was Jack's mental decision, as, strengthened and cheered by nourishing food and drink, he completed a job of lashing the water casks assigned him, after which the watch was sent below.

It was Jack's first wheel in the morning watch.

The gale which had driven the *Petrel* onward till the lofty portals of the "Golden Gate" had long since blended with the haze of distance, had settled into a strong, yet steady, breeze.

The course given was S. S. W., and Jack's feeling, as the schooner, obedient to the slightest movement of the wheel, went plunging on, with her sails distended by the wind, were not unlike those of one who holds the taughntened reins behind Maud S., or some similar fast-speeding equine.

A murmur of voices from the cabin was followed by the appearance of Captain Bolt, bluff-visaged and loud-voiced, gallantly escorting Aunt Maria, who, truth to tell, looked a trifle bilious from seasickness.

"Land of compassion!" was her first remark on reaching the quarter. "Can't you do somethin' to stiddy the vessel? Hol' me tight, Cap'n Bolt. I shall go kitin' over the side if you don't."

And Captain Bolt obeyed, with an evident relish, until the lady was safely deposited in a steamer-chair, of which three had been brought up by Carl the moment before.

Mr. Blasco, with a smiling display of even, white teeth, followed.

On one arm was a tall, beautiful girl, whose fine figure was displayed to admirable advantage by her close-fitting suit of navy-blue flannel, while a jaunty "Tam o' Shanter" crowned her wealth of dark hair.

Clinging half timidly to Blasco's other arm, was a rather diminutive specimen of womanhood, with the blackest of almond-shaped eyes, and hair no longer in bewildering puffs, but hanging behind in a massive braid. Little Weiho, of course, and she was attired not unlike her fair companion—with due regard to the necessities of a sea voyage.

A strange thrill ran through Jack's veins, as, having seated herself beside her aunt, Pearl Rundel turned her splendid eyes upon Jack, who for the moment was oblivious of his ragged shirt, patched trousers, bristly hair and copper-tinted visage.

What did it mean? Why did his heart begin to beat so furiously? Where—

"Stiddy, my lad—you're a p'int to loo'ard of your course," said Captain Bolt, squinting into the binnacle, as Mr. Blasco very unwillingly withdrew from the quarter, followed by the admiring eyes of little Weiho.

"Ay, ay, sir."

Jack pulled himself together, and brought the vessel to her course. Captain Bolt said something in an undertone to his fair companions.

"You don't say so!" remarked Aunt Maria, as Captain Bolt walked forward. And she fixed her gaze on Jack with such sharpness that he felt a trifle disconcerted as a remembrance of his uncouth outward appearance suddenly occurred to him.

None of the three passengers spoke for a few moments, as they drank in the wonderful beauty of the scene. Indeed, an unwonted silence prevailed on the vessel's deck.

The watch were at work sewing on some old sails gathered about the main hatch. Mr. Blasco leaned idly against the rail, supervising the job, in an indolent sort of way. Captain Bolt, humming an old sea tune under his breath, stood at the break of the quarter, looking down at the others.

Aunt Maria was first to break the silence.

"Jest think of it, Pearl," she said, suddenly, "Cap'n Bolt was tellin' me that the poor critter to the wheel was brought aboard dead drunk, with not much more clothes to his name than them things he's got on, an' lay in a 'sog' for nigh two days. And Cap'n Bolt says that he's all bewildered like now. Don't know whether his name's Tom, as it was down on the shippin' papers, or not."

"Hush, auntie! He can hear every word you say," gently reprimanded Pearl.

"Hear? What of that? He's a Portigee, or somethin', by the color. Taint likely he understan's more'n one word in ten."

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I understand perfectly," said Jack. "And Captain Bolt is mistaken. Something has happened to me—I cannot tell what—that makes my memory a perfect blank up to the time I woke up in the vessel's forecastle."

It was not alone this very unexpected rejoinder, couched in language totally unlooked for from such a source, that caused the three females to give a simultaneous start.

Pearl's fair face, flushed by the breezy morning air, became suddenly pale. Involuntarily, she pressed her hand against her heart.

"What does it mean?" she exclaimed. "Why, who does his voice resemble so much, auntie?"

"Wal, it sounds somethin' like Jack," was the dubious reply. "But voices and faces is of'en alike the world over."

But so, alas! it was. Yet as the name "Jack" was pronounced, Pearl's eyes detected the slightest shadow of a frown on the forehead of the strange-looking sailor, as one who tries in vain to recall a lost memory.

Nothing came of it, though for a long time after the watch was over, Jack lay tossing restlessly in his berth, while, whenever he closed his eyes, the beautiful face of the girl he had heard called Pearl presented itself to his bewildered senses.

Yet, for that matter, so, to a lesser degree, did the quaint, dark prettiness of little Weiho, as well as the sharper visage of the lady Pearl had called "aunt." It was the same strange half-consciousness of having seen them all somewhere as in a dream.

His three shipmates were chatting volubly in their own tongue. The name "Blasco" occurred more than once, from which Jack

naturally inferred that the mate was in some way under discussion.

"Say, Tom!"

Spike, who, lying in the bunk opposite, was sucking at a short, black pipe, suddenly motioned the others to silence, and thus addressed Jack:

"How you like muchee money—great, big lot to hab? Eh?"

"I should like it, of course," was Jack's rather surprised response. "What made you ask that?"

But, instead of answering, Spike, after cogitating a moment, asked:

"S'pose——"

Then pausing a moment, he counted on his brown fingers.

"S'pose one, two, t'ree—nine mans had million rupee! How much rupee b'long to one mans?"

"About a hundred and eleven thousand, one hundred and eleven rupees, over fifty-five thousand dollars," returned Jack, after a little mental calculation.

A trio of grunts attested to the evident interest in the reply.

"But why did you ask?" persisted Jack.

For it occurred to him that a purpose lay back of the peculiar question.

Spike seemed to hesitate.

"Oh, not'ing. Not great much, anyways. Only, million rupee aboard dis craf'. An' we only ask—dat all."

Great astonished at this unexpected news, Jack began further questioning.

Little by little he gathered from the disjointed fragments in the shape of replies that old Wah Lee, as part owner of the *Petrel*, was sending to his Calcutta consignees a sum equivalent to a million rupees in gold, fresh from the San Francisco mint, to be used for some special purpose in the East Indies.

He had chosen to send the specie in the *Petrel* for two reasons. One being to avoid its transshipment from steamer to steamer, as there was no regular line from Frisco. Another—and presumably the most important one—that there would be no heavy commission charges to pay.

"But how do you know all this?" was Jack's natural query.

"Blasco. He know. He tellee."

And then a silence fell upon them, as one after another dropped asleep.

"I wonder," thought Jack, drowsily, as he finally prepared to sink into the sound slumber of the sailor—"I wonder who the 'Jack' can be whose voice is so much like my own? Perhaps Miss Pearl's sweetheart. But, oh, I hope not."

CHAPTER XI.

BLASCO SHOWS HIS HAND.

Hoping to gain time, Captain Bolt purposed passing through Torres Straits, between New Guinea and Australia, rather than taking the usual course to the southward of the latter wonderful island world.

Jack had kept ears and eyes open—and to some purpose, as will soon be seen. But, through all, he had preserved a strong self-repression. For one reason—that, while he already knew enough from the men in his watch to more than verify his suspicions, Blasco himself had not yet squarely shown his hand.

It was one of those wonderful nights on a tropic sea as no pen of mine, "stylographic" or "fountain," can do justice to.

It was Jack's wheel from eight to ten. Captain Bolt and Aunt Maria were playing checkers in the cabin below. Their voices arose through the open companionway with amusing distinctness. For, though the schooner was not fairly halfway to her intended

BRAVE AND BOLD.

port of destination, it was plainly evident that, if a mutual understanding did not actually exist between the two, the time was not far distant when such would be the case.

Thanks to Blasco, Jack's apparel at the wheel was a decided improvement upon that which he had worn when he first grasped the spokes. For the chief mate had fairly forced upon him certain articles of sea attire, but little worn, from his own well-filled sea chest.

"You will take them, Tom," he had said, with a show of gleaming teeth, as the former entered a strong protest against such acceptance—"you will take what I offer in all kindness, or else make an enemy of me."

And "Tom" had finally acquiesced. It was not policy to make an enemy of Blasco—quite so soon.

So Jack's outward attire on the evening of which I speak was not only neat and tidy, but in accord with the warm latitudes they had entered upon.

A shirt of cream-colored French flannel, white duck trousers and low shoes, with a soft slouch hat, were vastly more to his taste than the tattered, tar-grimed rig in which he had made his first appearance.

His shorn hair had taken a start, and was beginning to give hints of its former tendency to wave and crisp at the ends. Only for the disfiguring dye Jack would have been a very presentable sailor boy. Even as it was, his finely-proportioned figure, manly carriage and dark eyes, full of a sort of wistful entreaty, made Jack a rather noticeable figure among his low-browed, stealthy-looking shipmates.

Pearl and little Weiho, who had grown to be great friends, came on deck later.

Jack felt a curious pang of mingled envy—and, I had almost said, hatred—toward Blasco, as Pearl lifted calm eyes of welcome to his dark, handsome face.

Carl was next to put in an appearance. His day's duties were done, and, being a somewhat privileged character, he was allowed the freedom of the quarter-deck in the evening.

Carl, who had evidently "slicked himself up" for the occasion, approached little Weiho rather sheepishly, and, crooking his arm in a jug-handle fashion, invited the small, almond-eyed female to walk in the lee gangway.

Well, Carl, with his light hair, blue eyes and honest, if somewhat heavy features, was by no means ill-looking or undesirable as a companion. And little Weiho demurely accepted.

Finally Pearl arose from her chair.

"I think I will go below," she said, rather coolly.

And, refusing Blasco's proffered assistance, made her way to the cabin.

A scowl replaced the bland smile of a moment before, and Jack heard the Spaniard mutter something under his breath.

Then lighting a cigar, Blasco walked forward, where Jack caught a glimpse of him a little later talking earnestly with one or two of the watch on deck.

But just then the striking of eight bells was followed by the change of watches, whereby Jack was relieved at the wheel.

Mr. Farr, the second officer, came on deck, yawning. Captain Bolt ascended to the quarter, followed by Aunt Maria, who clung to his coat sleeve like a burr. Blasco, instead of retiring to his stateroom, lingered on the main deck, and Jack had a presentiment that something would come of it.

He was not mistaken. As Jack was about entering the forecastle, Blasco beckoned him to a seat beside him on the heel of the bowsprit.

"Look you, Tom," he said, eying him keenly, "you have heard

things said from time to time by your shipmates that maybe give you some idea of what is in the wind."

Jack nodded, for he could not trust himself to speak just at that moment. Blasco at last was beginning to show his hand.

"*Bueno.* For your own sake you keep this secret. If you had been traitor you would give it away before this. The men tell me from time to time that you can be trusted. If we not sure of this you fall overboard some fine night; see?"

"I see—yes," was the cool reply. "But see you! I don't care a hang for threatening. I'm quite able to take care of myself."

Blasco smiled approvingly.

"You the right stuff—I know that from the first. Now listen. You know about the money? Very good. It will be share and share alike. But there is something better for you and I, who take the lead."

With an intuitive perception of what was meant, Jack clinched his fingers tightly in the palms of his hands and compressed his lips.

"Well?"

"I flatter myself," said Blasco, passing his hand over his dark, handsome face, "that I shall not make the bad companion for the lovely Pearl. You have perhaps seen that already she is pleased with my attentions. And if you have a fancy for the pretty little Japanese—there is nothing to hinder. You are not bad looking, and more than once I watch her make soft eyes at you."

The uppermost feeling in Jack's mind just then was to clutch the villainous speaker by the throat till his face was as black as his heart.

But restraining himself by a mighty effort, Jack responded:

"I hear and understand. But before I can bind myself I must know all your plans."

"That, of course," was the reply. "Now listen."

And lowering his voice, Blasco told his plans for a meeting.

* * * * *

From the very nature of things in such circumscribed limits as on shipboard, it is a matter of considerable difficulty for a foremast hand to get speech of his captain without the fact being known to his shipmates and commented upon accordingly.

In Jack's particular case it was even more difficult, as while not suspected of double dealing, he was conscious of being sharply watched by Blasco, after the latter's remarkable revelation of a plot only heretofore suspected.

Yet there was no time to be lost in putting Captain Bolt and Mr. Farr on their guard.

The negro cook, who held Blasco and the Malay crew in abject fear, could not be depended upon. So, as Jack figured it, counting himself as a matter of course, they were four, including Carl, against eight.

The defending party, it is true, would have the advantage presumed to be comprehended in the saying of "Forewarned—forearmed." And Jack knew that in the rack about the mainmast, which came up through the cabin, were a stand of army carbines of the old "Sharpe's" pattern, such as every vessel cruising in certain parts of the South Pacific should carry, even though English gunboats have greatly done away with danger of attack from piratical pros.

But, on the other hand, two of the Malays at least had revolvers stowed away in their sea-chests, and it was not unlikely to presume that all had similar weapons.

Added to these were the sharp sheath-knives always worn by the sailor. And these men, as has been before asserted, were reckless of possible consequences, when such a prize as they were playing for was attainable.

Worse still, Blasco had in his possession a small quantity of the terrible drug which the Malay uses when he would incite himself to some more than usually desperate deed. And this he was holding back till the proper time.

But how should he get proper warning to Captain Bolt?

This was Jack's continual thought by night and by day.

Fortune at length favored him.

He was doing a job of splicing on the main-halliards one afternoon. Blasco had stepped below for something. Pearl, who was pacing the deck like one who begins to weary of the monotony of a long sea voyage, passed him so near that her skirts brushed his knee.

"Miss Rundel," said Jack, in a rapid undertone and without lifting his eyes from his task, "don't appear to notice that I am talking, but stand quite still for a moment, as though you were looking off to sea. There is something I want of you—the fellow at the wheel has sharp ears and eyes."

Though greatly surprised, Pearl gave no outward sign. Pausing in her walk she stood almost in front of Jack, and shading her eyes with her hand, gazed steadfastly out over the unbroken expanse of blue ocean.

"To-night when I come to the wheel, contrive to slip a bit of paper and a pencil into my hand—there is something Captain Bolt should know that I dare not attempt to tell him by word of mouth."

"I understand," murmured Pearl, who did not understand at all; and then moved quietly away.

That night while his three shipmates were snoring, Jack lay in his berth penciling, by light of the smoky lamp, a message of considerable length.

Concealing this in the bosom of his shirt, Jack watched his chance and succeeded in handing it unobserved to Pearl as he passed up on the quarter.

And these are the contents of the hastily written note which caused Captain Bolt's florid face to take on what in a less mahogany-hued visage would have been called a sudden pallor:

"There is danger ahead. Blasco is plotting with the Malay crew to take possession of the vessel—principally on account of the million rupees in the boxes under the ballast. The plan, so far as I know it from Blasco, is this: To maroon you, Captain Bolt, with Mr. Farr and the steward, on some one of the islands of the Central Archipelago where communication with the outer world is prevented by the cannibalism of the natives. The schooner will then be repainted, her name changed and run to a Chinese or Japanese port, where she can readily be sold and no questions asked. There the plunder is to be divided, when each will go his different way.

"When I add that the three females are to be left on board, I have said all that is necessary on this subject. To insure the success of his devilish plan, Blasco has provided himself with some *bhang*, which he will give to the Malays when the time for action arrives. Some—if not all—are armed with revolvers. And tomorrow night is the time set, if I am right in assuming that in the morning the most northern of the Baddack group may be expected to be sighted. It is needless to say that I am presumed to be an active participant in the plot.

Tom."

"Thumpin' Sardanaphulas!" ejaculated Captain Bolt, who was given to extraordinary expletives in times of excitement.

Aunt Maria looked up from a book she was reading.

"What is it, Cap'n Bolt?"

"Yes, tell us, captain," said Pearl, who was sitting opposite and had been anxiously watching the changes which had passed across his weather-beaten visage, as he perused the note, which had greatly aroused her curiosity.

Little Weiho said nothing, but looked her entray.

"I can't read it," groaned Captain Bolt, who for the moment

had lost his usual sturdy self-possession—not so much from a sense of personal danger as that to which the helpless females were exposed. "It ain't possible!" he exclaimed. "He can't be such a plottin', sneakin', murderin' devil!"

"Who? Tom?" asked Pearl in great bewilderment.

"Tom? No!"

And pulling himself together Captain Bolt peered up the companionway, after which he listened at the cabin door for a moment.

"I can't read it!" he repeated hoarsely. "Here, Miss Pearl!"

"Why, but this is Jack's handwriting! I should know it anywhere!" cried Pearl, as she glanced at the peculiar chirography.

But as she read the first sentence, Pearl grew pale.

"For the land sake! what is it, Pearl? Anything killin'?" demanded Aunt Maria with considerable asperity.

"There'll be some killin' o' one side or t'other," grimly muttered the captain, under his breath.

But unheeding the suggestive remark, Pearl repeated the letter aloud word for word.

Aunt Maria's sharp face was a study. Horror, wonder, dismay and wrathful incredulity succeeded in quick succession. But the sentence relating to the three women seemed to have the uppermost place in her thoughts for the time being.

"So we're to be left aboard, be we? Indeed!" exclaimed Aunt Maria, with heightened color. "And I s'pose he thinks he can scare me or Pearl or little Weiho into marryin' of him."

Captain Bolt preserved a discreet silence. Then Aunt Maria went off on another tack.

"And he purposed to have you, Cap'n Bolt, with Mr. Farr and Carl, sot ashore and eat up by cannibals, does he? Very good! If you go, Benjamin, I go; if cannibals hev you for bakin', they'll have me!"

"M'ria'd be kind of tough, for a fac', and bony to boot, but a dretful sweet morsel, dretful sweet," soliloquized Captain Bolt audibly, being, as he afterward expressed it, "a little off" by reason of his agitation.

"Cap'n Bolt!" and Aunt Maria burst into a flood of tears, which were only allayed after an abject apology on the part of Captain Bolt.

Pearl said nothing for a little space—indeed, she could not realize that anything so like a story of fiction could be contemplated.

Then little Weiho, who had only shown her own emotion by a peculiar dilation of her dark eyes, arose, and going to her state-room, returned with something bright and gleaming in her hand. It was a small dagger, having a hilt incrusted with precious stones.

Little Weiho quietly called Pearl's attention to the weapon. Then, loosing her long braid of hair, she deftly did it up in the curious puffs peculiar to Japanese ladies, and skewered them with the dagger.

"Not going to harm Weiho or her lovely Pearl, either," said little Weiho, with a dangerous gleam in her dark eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

A GOOD MOVE.

A person, suddenly set down on the deck of the *Petrel* as she went bounding buoyantly onward toward her destination, would never dream that preparation for one of the sea tragedies which fact has shown to be so much stranger than fiction, was going on on the one hand, and the result awaited with almost agonized anxiety on the other.

For the watch on deck were pothinger such light tasks as could

BRAVE AND BOLD.

be found for them as usual, under the supervision of Blasco, whose smooth address and ever-ready smile were unchanged.

The three women occupied themselves—or pretended to do so—as though no such thing as danger or care existed for them. Captain Bolt, with a loaded revolver in his pocket, sat opposite his chief mate at the table during meals, and conversed very much as ordinarily. And all this time the tropic monsoon was sending the schooner flying over a summer sea and under a summer sky.

Captain Bolt had matured a plan in his own mind—desperate, it is true—but the only thing he could study out. It was, perhaps, more feasible, as well as more humane, than that which had been proposed by Carl, who had received the startling news quite composedly.

"I takes some strychnine from the medicine chest and put it in the tea. Pison the whole gang easy enough," was Carl's suggestion.

Mr. Farr had nothing to offer. But all that day he had been at work "serving" a round iron bar, some four feet long and three-fourths of an inch through, with tarred spun yarn.

In the hands of a muscular man like the tall, stooping second officer, such a weapon would be like the weaver's beam in the hands of Samson of old.

There was no opportunity to communicate with Jack by so much as a brief word, and this itself was an added difficulty, as those aft had no idea how he was purposing to play his part.

But as, after supper, he went as usual to the wheel, he whispered to Captain Bolt in passing:

"At eight bells—look out."

It was then six. The schooner was moving sluggishly over the moonlit swells by reason of the wind having died down, with the prospect of a calm to follow.

Below in the cabin, the three women, with fast-beating hearts, had assembled, knowing their presence on deck would avail nothing.

Meanwhile, on deck, Captain Bolt was getting himself in readiness for a grand blow.

Already he had noticed that the Malays, who, as a rule, were quiet and undemonstrative, were talking and laughing about the windlass in a manner foreign to their usual custom.

This was suggestive that the *bhang* was beginning to get in its work.

"Mr. Blasco, will you just come here to the rail a moment?" called Captain Bolt, in a matter-of-fact tone. "This patch of white sea we're passing through looks like we was in the deep channel to the su'th'ard of the group."

Blasco came unsuspectingly to the side of Captain Bolt, who pointed over the low bulwarks. And truly, it was a peculiar sight, for the vessel was slowly plowing her way through a milky expanse of water, shot through and through with phosphorescent fire, upon whose surface the moonbeams rested with a startling weird effect.

Captain Bolt gave one quick glance about him.

The two were standing to leeward of the main boom, concealed by the bellying sail from the watch on deck.

"I have seen it like this in the China Sea," began Blasco, eying the opaline waters, "but—"

His voice was suddenly smothered by the strong pressure of one of Captain Bolt's brawny hands across his mouth.

At the same moment, his assailant, throwing a muscular arm about Blasco's waist, raised him suddenly from his feet, and half threw—half-forced him over the low rail before he could utter a cry.

There was a tremendous splash alongside, simultaneous with which Captain Bolt's stentorian voice rang out:

"Man overboard! Mr. Blasco's slipped and fallen over the rail! Aft here, to the boat, three or four of you! Put the wheel down, and let the schooner come up in the wind!"

By rights, the last order should have been first issued.

But by delaying it to the last, the vessel had forged ahead some distance, leaving Blasco at least a cable's length astern, where his head was seen bobbling up in the phosphorescent wake.

Jack, with a vague intuition, derived in part from Captain Bolt's look, as the latter pushed him to the boat-fall, was slow in letting the vessel come up.

As she hung in the wind, with slatting sails, three of the Malays hurried aft, where Carl at one fall and Captain Bolt at the other, were preparing to lower from the stern davits.

"Into the boat! Lively, boys—lively! Spike, ship the rudder, and take the tiller-ropes. That's Blasco in the wake. Quick, now!"

Confused by the suddenness of the affair, the three tumbled into the boat, and began casting loose the oars which were lashed under the thwarts.

"Let go by the run!" shouted Captain Bolt, seeming to be greatly excited—as indeed he was, but for reasons of a different nature.

Down went the boat, the patent "clip" hooks freeing themselves as the keel touched the water.

Urged to renewed exertion by the cries of Blasco, who was swimming with all his might, the Malays shipped their oars, and began pulling like mad in his direction.

CHAPTER XIII.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

"I wish t'er shark might gobble him!" phlegmatically remarked Carl, who appeared the least excited of any one on board.

"Now, Tom, put the wheel up, and let her head pay off. Miss Pearl—"

But Pearl, knowing what was expected of her, flew lightly up the companionway steps, followed by Mr. Farr, carrying a loaded carbine in either hand.

Pushing Jack gently from the wheel, Pearl took the spokes in her own small hands, for, to beguile the tedium of the voyage, she had learned to steer ordinarily well.

Mr. Farr handed one carbine to Carl, the other to Jack, after which he armed himself with the iron bar from the top of the house. Captain Bolt drew a revolver from his breast.

It was time. The remaining Malays, bewildered by the suddenness of the whole affair, and seemingly at a loss what to do without Blasco, had rushed to the side, where they stood for a moment watching the receding boat.

But as, the wheel being put up, the slatting sails began to distend, and the vessel once more began her onward course, a suspicion of the truth began to dawn upon them.

With a blood-curdling yell the four made a simultaneous rush aft—to be confronted with two cocked carbines and a revolver.

"Throw down your pistols, you liver-colored devils, or we'll bore you as full of holes as a tin skimmer!" yelled Captain Bolt.

The language of firearms is generally understood by half-civilized people the world over. Moreover, they were without a leader.

Sullenly enough the command was obeyed. Three ugly-looking self-cockers of the bulldog pattern were produced and laid on the hatch.

Covered by the muzzles of the carbines, three of the Malays, in

obedience to another stern command, suffered their wrists to be knotted behind them. The fourth was conducted to the wheel, which Pearl but too gladly resigned. With a gentle intimation that the least sign of treachery would be followed by a bullet through his skull, the Malay was bidden to keep the vessel on her course.

A new cause of anxiety was the but too evident fact that the wind was fast dying out. And in addition, a dense haze had begun to veil the moonlight, leaving only a faint, luminous spot to indicate the whereabouts of the orb of night, which, spreading over the stilling surface, left the vessel enshrouded in an almost impenetrable body of vapor.

"D'ye hear anything of the boat?" asked Captain Bolt anxiously as he wiped the perspiration from his face.

But though they listened intently not the slightest sound was heard excepting the swash of the water about the bows as the schooner lazily arose and fell on the long swells, mingled with the monotonous "p-l-l-a-a-p" of the reef-points against the almost idle canvas.

The sound of voices or the rattle of oars in a boat's rowlocks can be heard a long distance at such times, yet nothing of the kind was to be distinguished.

Captain Bolt drew a long breath of relief.

"They've got turned around in the fog or haze, or whatever 'tis, and pulled off in t'other direction," he said, breaking the silence.

Mr. Farr, who had laid aside his bar with a sigh as of regret at not having been able to test its usefulness, shook his head.

"That remains to be seen, cap'n. Anyway, it'll pay to keep the best kind of a lookout fore and aft while the calm continues," was his suggestive response; which advice was at once acted upon.

Then a council of war was convened, from which Carl alone was excluded by being sent forward on the top-gallant forecastle with a carbine to keep watch.

The *Petrel*, no longer under steerage-way, needed no one at the wheel.

The Malay helmsman, with his hands neatly confined at his back, was escorted to the main deck, where his companions were seated in sullen silence about the main hatch—their sheath-knives having been taken away as well as the firearms.

The entire remaining ship's company then assembled on the quarter.

Deprived of their weapons, and made to understand that they were under the strictest kind of surveillance, with instant death as a reward for the slightest show of treachery, the remaining Malays, once free of the influence of the *bhang*, would be rendered comparatively harmless, at least for the short time they would remain aboard; for Captain Bolt declared his intention of stopping at some of the islands further south, where trading schooners, or whalers in search of fresh provisions, touch. Here he would turn the Malays adrift, and, if possible, ship Kanakas enough to finish the voyage.

This decided upon, Captain Bolt turned to Jack.

"Thanks to you, my lad," he said, heartily, "I've saved old Wah Lee's rupees and the vessel to boot. There's where my thanks come in. The wimmin folks—well, they must speak for themselves."

Which they did, each in her own special way. Aunt Maria gave him a resounding smack; little Weiho presented her own plump olive cheek with charming simplicity, seeming a trifle disappointed that Jack, conscious of Pearl's gaze bent upon him, only touched his lips to her forehead.

And Pearl, in whose beautiful eye was a suspicion of dewy tears, placed her slim, warm hand in Jack's own.

The contact thrilled Jack through and through. Especially as for a moment allowing her fingers to remain in his clasp, she drew him one side.

"You must pardon me if I am inquisitive," she said, gently, "but your handwriting, which I saw for the first time in the note of warning to Captain Bolt, was so like that of a—a very dear friend of my own and Aunt Maria's, that I want to ask you a question or two."

"Anything that I can tell you, I will," returned Jack. And—perhaps unconsciously—he retained the small hand nestling like a snowflake in his own brown palm.

"Is it some severe illness that seems to have so strangely shut out everything of the past from your mind?" she asked, bending her clear eyes intently on Jack's own.

Who shall say by what strange and subtle influence the look thus exchanged seemed to touch some hidden chord of memory?

"Alas, I cannot tell that," he sadly exclaimed, "but this much has come to me from the touch of your hand—and the look in your eyes. Somewhere—at—some time, Miss Pearl, I have known you—"

"There has been foul play in some way," Jack went on, hurriedly—"perhaps a blow on the head producing pressure upon the brain—I have heard of such things. For, see—"

With a quick movement Jack pushed his sleeve above his elbow! Beyond the disfigured stain was the firm white flesh!

CHAPTER XIV.

BOARDED!

As Jack revealed the fact that his outward coloring was not due to nature's handiwork, Pearl uttered a little cry of astonishment.

"I might have guessed it," she said, breathlessly. "Oh, Jack—it must be Jack! Try and remember. The Pacific Club House in San Francisco—my wicked half-brother, Arthur Rundel, who kept back the letters from my own father in India, to join whom I am making this voyage, with Aunt Maria as companion—"

"Jack, Jack," dreamily repeated that young man, drawing nearer the side of the agitated girl; "it dimly seems as though in a dream you had called me that before. It must be so; your woman's instinct is truer than mine."

Jack had unconsciously drifted into the first bit of melodramatic speech of which he was ever guilty. Yet there was nothing melodramatic in his action.

For the two had gradually withdrawn from the group at the after end of the cabin, and the dense haze surrounding the vessel was almost as impenetrable as the soft gloom of a tropic night.

"Pearl," said Jack, very low and tenderly, stealing his arm about her supple, yielding form—"my Pearl!"

And as the trembling girl turned her lovely face toward his own, their lips met in one long, clinging kiss,

The whole world became changed for them then.

All the perils passed and hardships to come were forgotten as the two stood side by side repeating the old, old story—which is ever new.

"Pears to me," remarked Aunt Maria, rubbing the top of her sharp nose impatiently as she peered through the vapor which enshrouded the *Petrel* from stem to stern—"pears to me Pearl's a good while sayin' what she had to say to that young feller. And I don't make out but one of 'em standin' there—or else the two is dretful clost together; which ain't like Pearl, seeing she's the properest kind of a young girl that ever lived."

"Oh, I guess it's all right," returned Captain Bolt, with a sly

BRAVE AND BOLD.

twinkle in his eye; "this fog-bank is kind of deceiving, anyway, and—"

The conclusion of his speech was never heard. All at once the veil of mist at the vessel's bow was shot through by a shaft of flame. A sharp report went echoing through the air. Then followed a frenzied shout from Carl.

"Look out—d'er boat—"

Before the sentence was completed, four men, infuriated, blind with rage, swarmed in over the bows.

In an instant the discharged carbine was snatched from his hand, while poor Carl himself was struck insensible by a blow from the butt.

With a wild yell, the Malays, headed by Blasco, rushed forward. The yell was echoed by the bound men on the deck, whose lashings were severed with lightning-like rapidity by Spike.

Shouting something in the Malay tongue, Blasco, whose face was that of a veritable demon, discharged the carbine in quick succession at the little group on the quarter, who, taken completely by surprise, were standing in a confused huddle.

Captain Bolt threw up his arms with a wild cry, and fell heavily to the deck, with a torrent of blood streaming from his temple, which a bullet had grazed with sufficient force to render him insensible.

Hastily ordering Pearl below, out of the range of stray bullets, Jack dashed to the side of Mr. Farr, who had snatched his iron bar—picking up a dropped carbine on the quarter.

But, before he could throw it to his shoulder, the infuriated Malays were upon them.

Then, Jack says, a sort of bloody film came before his eyes. He remembers clubbing the carbine, and bringing it down on a Malay skull, with a horrible, crushing sound.

He knew that Blasco turned aside a revolver pointed at his head—though not from merciful motives—ah, no! Jack was to be reserved for something less painless than death.

He saw Mr. Farr's iron bar, swung like a feather-weight in the air, fell two of the foe in quick succession. Then, coming face to face with Blasco, Jack struck a savage blow at his head.

But Blasco sprang quickly one side, and before Jack had recovered, seized him in a vise-like grip.

"Devil of a traitor!" he hissed, as Jack, himself no mean antagonist, closed with him, "it is you, then, I thank for this!"

"Yes, it was me, you black-hearted half-breed!" panted Jack, strivings to clutch at his adversary's throat.

But the odds were against him, for in another moment Jack was struck down by a cowardly blow from behind.

Mr. Farr fell to the deck, stabbed through the heart. The negro cook, who had barricaded himself in the galley, was not interfered with, partly by virtue of his office. And the *Petrel* was in the hands of her captors.

Carl, Captain Bolt and Jack were bound, even as they lay insensible, and dragged to one side of the deck for disposition later on. Mr. Farr's dead body, with those of two Malays, were hastily thrown overboard.

After which ensued a breathing spell. A bottle of brandy was brought from the steeward's pantry and passed around without the formality of tumblers.

It was a dearly-bought victory, after all. Two Malays were killed outright. One had a bullet-hole through his arm, another a broken wrist and a third a broken head—thanks to poor Mr. Farr's practice with the iron bar.

The females had barricaded themselves in the cabin, and no immediate attempt to disturb them was made.

Some time after midnight a light breeze again sprang up, and

the schooner was headed her course; and as later the rising sun began dispersing the mists, a new scene was enacted on the *Petrel's* deck.

Captain Bolt and Carl, both of whom had recovered consciousness, were dragged into the empty forecastle and the door closed upon them.

For Jack, something different was in store. Four empty water casks were fastened together by stout scantlings nailed across the heads on either side. A rough board platform was secured on the top, which, when the whole affair was put over the side was some two feet above the surface of the long heaving swells.

Blasco stepped to the side of his bound and helpless prisoner with an ugly smile.

"Killing is too good luck for a fellow that has done like you. We got something different," he said. "Hope you like it."

At a sign, three of the men raised Jack from the deck and lowered him to the raft, where he lay with his hands lashed behind him and ankles firmly secured, staring stolidly up at the cloudless sky, wondering vaguely how soon he should awaken from the horrible nightmare which was holding him in its clutches.

Blasco motioned to one of the Malays, who severed the rope by which the raft was towing alongside. Ten minutes later, with the freshening morning breeze, the schooner left the raft and its living cargo almost two miles astern.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

"And now," said Blasco, "for the ladies."

Mr. Blasco had washed off the powder marks, had shaved and arranged himself in a partial suit of white linen preparatory to his visit to the cabin.

The stains of the recent tragedy had been scrubbed from the deck-plank.

The cook, in quaking and dread, had prepared breakfast for the *Petrel's* captors.

Blasco had braced himself for the anticipated interview with a caulkier of brandy—anticipating, as he did, a storm of feminine reproaches and opprobrious epithets.

"It is the old woman that is worst—she I will set ashore with my good captain and the Dutch steward. The young are easily consoled. And my fair Pearl will consent to a marriage by some missionary in due time, without doubt."

Between the inner cabin, where the three women had barricaded themselves, and the outer cabin, from which the mate and second mate's staterooms were entered, was a bulkhead, in the middle of which a small curtained window had been placed.

When the outer cabin doors were open, a clear view of the deck was thus obtainable by the occupants of the inner cabin. And even when these were closed, the two uncurtained windows on either side of the doors permitted a partial view of the deck.

Blasco threw open the doors and stepped jauntily over the threshold. But there he stopped short.

The bulkhead window had been pushed open just far enough to admit of a carbine barrel being thrust out. The curtain hid the rest, but Mr. Blasco had an instinctive perception that an eye was glancing along the barrel a little under a fold of the curtain.

"So—they would think to frighten off a caller," began Blasco, with an agreeable smile, when—"

"Crack," went the carbine, and a ball whizzed past Blasco's head, so near as to clip a lock of his crisp, black hair, and buried itself in the door frame.

"Caramba!" was the astounded exclamation, "it must be fired by accident!"

All the same, Mr. Blasco deemed it prudent to beat a retreat.

On the report three of the Malays at their breakfast on the windlass dropped pots and pans. Spike, whose left arm was in a sling, hurried along the deck just as Blasco dodged from the cabin door.

Another sharp explosion followed. The Malay fell like a log—shot fairly between the eyes.

Uttering an oath, Blasco lost no time in seeking shelter forward. Here was a complication indeed—and a dangerous one!

The carbines were all in the cabin, with at least fifty rounds of ammunition. No one could venture aft of the for'ard house excepting at the peril of his life.

The provisions and water were under deck. So, too, were the coveted rupees, and there was no access to the hold below excepting through the main hatch, which itself was directly fronting the open cabin doors.

True, under cover of night, the enemy might contrive some way of dislodging their fair foe. But the wheel must be relieved before long. And as the wind was freshening, the gaff-topsails should be taken in, or in a sudden squall the tapering topmasts might go.

Blasco stamped his foot in impotent rage. It would not do to unloose either of the prisoners in the forecastle to send as an embassy to the cabin, for thus the forces aft would be augmented. Worse still, the chart of the South Pacific, lying open on the cabin table, ought even then to be consulted, for the schooner had fairly entered the Central Archipelago with its network of outlying coral reefs and islets lying between the larger and habitable groups.

This, as soon as his wrath would permit, Blasco explained to his four remaining companions.

One of them, known as Timbo, tall, gaunt, and one-eyed, tightened his belt around him.

"Shet d'em door, firs'," he said, briefly.

Blasco nodded and drew from his pocket a small silver case containing some pellets of a grayish green color, one of which he silently handed the Malay, who swallowed it at a gulp.

"Me, too," demanded a second man, and his request was acceded to.

Timbo stood for a moment motionless. Then a sharp observer might have seen a dilation of the pupil of his snaky eye, like that produced by belladonna, while in the very center appeared a lurid gleam! The drug had taken effect! Under its baleful influence any risk would be taken—any crime committed!

Dropping on all fours, Timbo crawled along the side of the house till he reached the after end. Poking his head around the corner, he paused to reconnoiter—

"Crack!"

Timbo lurched forward a little and fell face down with outstretched arms. A quiver ran through his limbs, and that was all.

Blasco had now, including the man at the wheel, three left out of the seven Malays who had so confidently reckoned on sharing the million rupees.

And the helmsman was practically useless as an addition to his forces, besides being evidently tremendously scared at the untimely fate of his companions.

Before Blasco could pull himself together, the other drug-frenzied native drew his revolver and rushed straight toward the fatal door, firing barrel after barrel as fast as he could pull the trigger at the little bulkhead window.

One louder report followed, and the Malay, dropping the discharged weapon like a hot potato, uttered a tremendous yell, and

ran forward, with the skin of his forearm plowed to the bone by a bullet.

Nor did he stop at the windlass. The boat had been left towing at the fore-chains. Into it he tumbled pell-mell, followed by the one Malay remaining at that end of the vessel, he at last deciding that discretion was the better part of valor.

What could Blasco do? To remain would avail him nothing but sure defeat and disaster in the end. All was literally lost—vessel, rupees, and a charming wife.

Hesitating no longer, Blasco, uttering a tremendous execration, swung himself over the bow and into the boat. One slash of his knife and the painter was severed. Then setting mast and sail, the staunch longboat was headed to the eastward, with the expectation of reaching some island group by or perhaps before nightfall.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PROPOSAL.

Meanwhile Carl and Captain Bolt were lying, bound and helpless, in the dark forecastle, listening with frenzied eagerness to all that was going on outside.

Carl had partly recovered from his own stunning blow, to see Mr. Farr murdered and Jack struck senseless from behind. There was no doubt, therefore, in the minds of the two but that the bodies of both were lying on the canal bottom miles astern.

Then had followed the succeeding rifle reports, the source of which neither could conceive, knowing Joe, the negro cook, to be a coward, while the three females were presumably cowering in the cabin.

But they knew, by the steps skurrying past the forecastle door a little later, that three men had escaped in the boat; moreover, that one of the three was Blasco.

And the silence that followed was suddenly broken by Captain Bolt bellowing:

"Joe! You, Joe! If you don't come here and cut us loose I'll break every bone in your body!" which rather Hibernian way of putting it had its due effect.

"Dey's gone, cap'n—dat Blasco and de only two men he had lef'; but dar's bin drefful doin's—drefful!" sobbed Joe, who was almost imbecile from fright, as with shaking hands he cut the prisoners' lashings.

"But the wimmin folks—what of them?" hoarsely demanded Captain Bolt, as he chaffed his numbed limbs, which at first would not allow him to rise.

"Oh, dem's all right," returned Joe; "dey take care of dem-selves eb'y time, locked up dar in de cabin after dem piritis frowned poor Tom an' de second mate oberboard."

"But who do der shootin'?" asked Carl, as he followed Captain Bolt out on deck, where the first objects meeting their gaze was the lifeless bodies of the two Malays.

"De wimmin' folks, I spec'—dunno who else; for de truf is," said Joe, rolling up his eyeballs, "I didn't see much was goin' on after dey fastened me inter de galley."

"Dat was one lie. You fastens yourself in, you big coward!" interrupted Carl. "But neffer mind. Cap'n Bolt, maybe you better take one little wash. You scare dem wimmin folks bad as der Malays."

For the blood from the captain's wound had dried on his face and in his hair and whiskers, while his shirt was bloody, smoke-stained and in rags; and altogether, as Joe expressed it, he was "a sight fer to behold."

But Captain Bolt was too anxious to think of looks. Having cast the bodies of the two slain Malays over the rail, Joe was set

BRAVE AND BOLD.

at work scrubbing up the ghastly traces of the tragedy. Then he hurried into the outer cabin just as he was, only to start back in wild-eyed amazement as through the small window, from which the glass was completely shattered, popped the barrel of a carbine.

"There's another! Where on earth did he come from?" a high-pitched, hysterical voice, which he knew belonged to Aunt Maria, exclaimed from within.

Yet the folds of the curtain completely shielded the interior from his view, and whether the leveled carbine was held by the speaker or one of the others, it was impossible to tell.

"M'ria! Miss Pearl! Weiho," bawled Captain Bolt, dodging instinctively under the table, "don't shoot! it's me—and Carl!"

A joyful exclamation was heard from within; the threatening weapon was hastily withdrawn and after a brief delay the door was unlocked and thrown open.

The three females stood grouped in the middle of the cabin. The carbines were in their places in a rack about the mainmast. Who of the three had been the heroine?

Captain Bolt stood staring at the trio in amazement too deep for immediate speech. Aunt Maria was first to the fore.

"We—thought—you—was—all—dead," she sobbed hysterically—"you—and—Carl—and—Tom—"

"He, Tom, dead—t'rowed over der rail along ob d'er secon' mate," interrupted Carl, "and it was one great shame, so brave as he was!"

No one spoke for a little. Then Pearl, who had stood with her small hand pressed against her heart as one anticipating terrible news, sank on her knees and buried her face in the soft cushion of the cabin lounge.

Meanwhile, Captain Bolt had plenty of business on his hands. Having had his wound washed and strapped with sticking-plaster by Aunt Maria, he scrubbed off the marks of the fray, got into a clean shirt and as he mentally expressed it, began taking account of stock.

His vessel and the consignees' rupees were safe. So, too, were the ladies intrusted to his charge, which was great cause for thankfulness. As, indeed, was the fact that he had got rid of his villainous first officer with an equally villainous crew.

The loss of Mr. Farr, as well as that of the mysterious "Tom"—confounded in some strange way by his passengers with the young fellow who had come aboard in San Francisco to make the arrangements for them—was lamentable, of course.

But there were other and more serious considerations. His crew now consisted of one terrified Malay, who still stood at the wheel trembling in his shoes, together with himself as captain, a cook and steward. And the voyage itself was not more than half completed.

To run into some island port and, if possible, ship a Kanaka crew was, of course, all he could do under the circumstances.

Whereupon Captain Bolt, after diligently consulting his chart, decided that, as the weather was fine and the wind fair, he would run down to Bonka Island as the most likely place to replenish his crew.

For at the more frequented groups in this vicinity whalers are continually touching to ship natives in place of runaway sailors. Thus there are always more or less active, dark-skinned fellows speaking "pigeon-English," and fairly acquainted with working a vessel, to be picked up through the New Hebrides and further south.

So, with a stern admonition, the remaining Malay, who had been standing at the wheel some twelve or fourteen hours, was dismissed for a time—Carl, who could steer a tolerable trick, relieving him.

But it was a strange change, take it all around.

The deck was like that of a deserted ship. A silence seemed to have fallen upon his three passengers. Pearl's fair face was shaded by a look of sorrow as, with some black ribbons fluttering from her white dress, she stood near the rail with eyes bent on the dark water that rushed past the speeding vessel. Little Weiho was silent and abstracted. And more remarkable still, Aunt Maria's tongue had lost its sharpness, her manner something of its energy and vivacity.

"It's the shooting that's weighing on their minds," was the good captain's thought, "wimmin are so dretful tender-hearted. I s'pose what they done seems almost a sin—to them."

Indeed, Captain Bolt was considerably exercised on this same subject. For it had not been referred to by either of the three, and the captain's curiosity was aroused to know whose had been the fatal aim, and which it was whose hand had trembled to the extent that one shot had missed Blasco, while another had only wounded his Malay companion, as he had learned from their talk while he lay with Carl bound in the forecastle.

This was in his mind as he went below for another look at the chart.

Aunt Maria was reading the Bible, while the tears coursed freely down her cheeks, whereupon Captain Bolt's sensitive heart was greatly moved.

"What is it, M'ria?" he asked, tenderly.

But Miss Jones only shook her head.

"Now, look here," said the captain, patting Aunt Maria's shoulder, "is it this shooting bizness you all feel so bad about?"

Aunt Maria nodded and wiped her eyes.

"I—s'pose you kind of divided it up betwixt you, eh?" ventured the captain.

"We—we've took the solemnest k-k-ind of a oath never to tell nothin' about i-i-t," sobbed the maiden lady, "for it's—a d-dretful thing to kill a—a-feller-bein' in c-cold blood—or even wound one."

"I see," briskly returned the captain. "It was you, then, that only barked the feller's arm. Instid of sheddin' tears for that, you ought to cry that you hadn't made a clean shot of it like the others did."

"And you wouldn't thought none the less of me, cap'n?" asked Aunt Maria, looking up tearfully.

"The less of you!" repeated Captain Bolt. "Look here! what you three wimmin did in that line was justifiable according to the laws of God and man both. It was heroism of the highest order. If you, M'ria," said the captain, waxing enthusiastic, "had a-done every atom of the shooting your own self, I'd have been prouder'n a king if I was your husband—which, if you'll say yes, here and now, I will be if there's a minister in the whole city of Calcutta."

It was certainly a very remarkable way of popping the question. But Aunt Maria evidently did not think so. For she said:

"Yes!" in a voice that, ascending through the open companion-way, reached the ears of Carl at the wheel.

A little later, Captain Bolt ascended from the cabin, looking rather sheepish, yet with a broad smile on his weather-beaten face, which disappeared as he glanced seaward.

For again, as so often happens in those summery latitudes, the wind was dying out, and the schooner, hardly obedient to the helm, arose and fell with sluggish motion on the long, oily swells, which were only ruffled here and there by faint "cat's-paws."

"Another calm," he muttered, impatiently; "seems as though the Petrel had struck a streak of bad luck lately."

CHAPTER XVII.

A PIRATE.

Quite early on the morning of the same day, a large lorcha of some two hundred tons burden was standing across the translucent, coral-bottom, islet-studded sea, lying between the Solomon Archipelago and the Central Archipelago—latitude about two north of the equator.

This vessel, peculiar to Pacific waters, was one of the swiftest of her class, eighteen knots an hour not being an uncommon rate in a strong breeze. Yet to the ordinary observer the lorcha was a rather clumsy-looking craft. Her hull, coated with pitch, sat low in the water, with a gradual rise from midships aft, making the poop considerably higher than the forecastle, after the fashion of an Arab *dhow*.

But the secret of the lorcha's speed lay in her sharp bows, shallow draught and immense matsails of latteen cut, hoisting to the very head of the two "stump" masts of bamboo half the thickness of a man's waist.

Though, even then, there was only the land breeze puffing from distant island shores, the lorcha went skimming over the smooth sea like a bird, yet with but the slightest displacement of the waves.

Now presumably the days of pirates and pirating are relegated to the past. Yet the voyager in certain parts of the South Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and about the Molucca or the Sunda Straits, can tell quite another story.

It is true the big East Indiamen and the few clippers remaining in our merchant service seldom encounter the marine freebooters of a score of years ago, unless becoming embayed among the islands about the Moluccas, or perchance dropping anchor in certain parts of the Java Sea to prevent drifting on to the coral reefs in a calm.

Yet a few piratical proas and lorchas still pursue their illegitimate calling when the opium smuggling or slave-kidnapping business is in a depressed state.

And it is not impossible that the craft I am speaking of might be open to suspicion as regards either of the three unlawful pursuits.

Scattered about her decks were something like threescore men of different nationalities—though by far the larger proportion were from the races east of the Cape of Good Hope.

There were Krooboy and Kanaka; Lascar and Sooloese, Malays and Javanese, half-bloods and creoles, with others whose race origin would be as hard to discover as their strange dialect to be understood.

Among these, however, were types of what we playfully term the "civilized" races. As, for example, the lorcha's bo'sun, whose hook nose, swarthy visage, and fiercely pointed mustache, not less than the "sacrees" which rolled from his thick, sensual lips, bespoke his French origin.

Two others, who by their dress and manner were officers of a higher grade, were severally Scotch and English—men who, through vice and crime, had deserted or been dismissed the service—"renegades," to use the common term in vogue with seafarers.

The lorcha's commander, moodily pacing to and fro, with an eye to the two men manipulating the large carved tiller, was evidently of European blood, despite his sunbrowned face, of which but little could be seen, by reason of his having iron-gray whiskers. He was of thick-set build, and walked with the habitual roll of a thorough seaman.

"We better have hung on to the s'uth'ard of Borneo, or around the Celebes, after all, Mr. Mack," he said, addressing his Scotch

chief mate, who stood leaning against the mainmast smoking a Manila cheroot half as long as a walking-stick.

"Ay, cap'n, but we'll be takin' our chances anywhere these days. What wi' the gunboats and a', there's small hope of turnin' in an honest penny at our line, whether it's smugglin' a bit of opium or pickin' up a tradin' schooner. Beesness is goin' to the very de'il."

Mr. Mack expectorated violently after this little ebullition, and subsided into a gloomy silence.

"I shall stand on a few hours longer," remarked the lorcha's captain, unheeding the grumble, "and if nothing worth while comes up, will 'bout ship and—"

A hail from a sort of "crow's-nest" at the foremast head arrested his further speech.

"What does he say?"

"A ship's boat, with three men, heading to the east'ard," returned the second officer, who acted as a sort of general interpreter.

The captain took up a battered spyglass and pointed it in the direction indicated. Then he motioned to change the lorcha's course.

The tapering yards were checked in a bit, and with the breeze well on the quarter the lorcha swept downward to the distant boat with wonderful swiftness.

Seeing that the pursuers sailed two feet to their one, the pursued brought their boat to the wind, unstepped the mast and sail, and as the lorcha rounded to, caught a line thrown from the deck. In another moment the three comprising the boat's crew had clambered over the rail, obedient to an imperative gesture from the commander.

As may be presumed, the trio were Blasco and his two remaining Malays, the latter of whom, recognizing some fellow-countrymen on the lorcha's deck, at once joined them.

"Give an account of yourself," said the commander, shortly.

Blasco, who seemed to be very much at his ease, as though such surroundings were not unfamiliar, shrugged his shoulders.

"*Bueno*. My name is Blasco—"

"I have heard of you," quietly interrupted the other, raising his eyes to the dark, sneering face; "go on. And stick to the truth—if you can."

Blasco hesitated. Alas, he had not had time to instruct his Malays as to what story they might tell. Yet, surely, like himself, baffled of a rich prize, they would never be fools enough to throw the same into the hands of some one else. Anyway, he would chance it.

"We belong to a brig bound to Melbourne," he said boldly. "Last night one of the men fell overboard. We lowered for him, and pulling around in the haze lost our reckoning altogether. This morning, when it cleared up, the brig was nowhere in sight. So we steered as nearly as we could to the eastward to strike the nearest island group."

"Hum!" was the dubious comment. "What is it, Brace?"

For the second officer, to whom one of the lorcha's crew had been making a hasty communication, came aft with some little show of excitement.

Brace, who was burly and big-whiskered, whispered back something in his commander's ear.

"Ah, I thought you were lying, Manuel Blasco," said the commander, coolly. "Very good, Mr. Brace; tell the bo'sun to point the yards for'ard. The vessel is about twenty miles off in a S. by W. course, eh? And a thousand rupees on board! That sounds promising."

How bitterly Blasco cursed his loquacious Malays in his heart

BRAVE AND BOLD.

as, obedient to her helm, the lorcha's head swung around and steadied at the point mentioned, can be faintly imagined. He stood biting his thin lips in sullen silence for a moment; then he came nearer.

"*Bueno.* I was lying. But, see you! there are three women on board. It was to save them I lied."

But the lorcha's captain waved him impatiently away.

"Go forward with your men!"

And Blasco slunk away.

His only hope was that the lorcha might fail to overhaul the *Petrel*, having only the Malays' vague directions to go by.

But his hope was doomed to disappointment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOOTING THE PETREL.

An hour later the schooner's white sails were distinctly seen. And before the calm had fairly settled down on the face of the deep, the lorcha, aided by immense sweeps, was alongside.

Captain Bolt, with Aunt Maria at one side, while Pearl and little Weiho stood at the other, seemed half paralyzed at this new and terrible form of misfortune. Resistance would only precipitate matters. He knew but too well the desperate character of those before him.

The lorcha's commander stepped to the rail. His eyes under their bushy brows glanced from Captain Bolt, irresolute and dismayed, to the pale, beautiful face of Pearl, who stood drawn up to her full height, one small hand grasping a spoke of the idle wheel. Then he gave a sudden start, and Brace, who stood near him, heard him mutter:

"My God! it can't be."

Suddenly he turned to his first officer.

"Mr. Brace," he said, in a strange undertone, "tell those fellows in their own lingo that I'm going aboard the schooner first, for a palaver with the captain. And if one of 'em so much as steps foot over the rail till I give the word, I'll put a ball through his head on the moment."

Mr. Brace repeated this word for word, in some diabolical dialect which seemed to be understood—eked out as it was by pantomimic action with a pistol.

A chorus of muttering followed, but it was plain that the white commander was held in wholesome awe, as no one stirred from his place.

The lorcha's commander stepped lightly from the rail to the schooner's deck.

"Captain," he said, in a gruff voice, which might or might not be feigned—averting his gaze as far as possible from that of the females, "I learn that there are a million rupees in boxes under the ballast in the hold. We shall have to relieve you of them."

"No more'n we might have expected," snapped Aunt Maria, who seemed to have fully recovered her wonted energies; "seein' that—"

Pearl laid her hand on her aunt's arm and bent her steady gaze on the bronzed and bearded face of the man, who dropped his eyes to the deck.

"You seem to be a European," she said in a clear though slightly tremulous voice. "May I ask you if you can protect three defenseless women from the insults of those—wretches on board your own vessel?"

"I should hope so," was the gruffly significant reply. And deliberately drawing one of the pistols from his belt, he laid the barrel in the bend of his left arm.

Carl, who had been standing a little in the rear, stared very hard at the speaker and rubbed his head in a dazed sort of way.

The lorcha's captain, looking suddenly up, caught his eye. Carl's lips parted as though to utter an exclamation. The other shook his head as though commanding silence. Then he made a sign to his officers. Mr. Brace gave the longed-for order.

Over the rail swarmed the crew, off came the hatches, and in less time than it takes to write the account, a gang of men were tearing away the ballast rock below, while another, under the supervision of Brace, rigged whips, with which ten heavy boxes were hoisted out and transferred to the lorcha's deck.

Meanwhile, the commander walked, pistol in hand, to the break of the quarter, followed by Captain Bolt, who, after a time, found his tongue.

"I'm fixed so I can't help myself, and it's no use jawing," he said, gloomily, "so if you'll stick to your word about the wimmin—"

"Don't worry. Not one shall be troubled in any way. How came you in this fix—without a crew, I mean?"

Captain Bolt explained in as few words as possible.

"So? And that hound of a Blasco wanted beauty as well as booty, eh? and hoped to win the favor of a woman like Pearl Rundel."

"How'n thunder did you know her name?" ejaculated Captain Bolt.

"No matter. See here, Captain Bolt. I knew this vessel once. I've got half a dozen discontented chaps—Kroomen and Kanakas—who would be glad to ship with you if I said the word. Do you want them?"

"Well, I guess. Only—there ain't no trick or anything?" ejaculated Captain Bolt, in wild-eyed amazement.

"Your rupees are gone; you needn't fear," was the significant answer. And Captain Bolt hurried back to his passengers with the glad news.

A few hasty words to Mr. Brace were communicated to the Kanakas and Kroomen, who lost no time in collecting their scanty effects and tumbling aboard the schooner.

The lorcha's commander beckoned to Carl.

"I see you know me, Carl, in spite of beard and all," he said, rapidly; "now tell me about Miss Pearl—is she on her way to India to join her father?"

"Yes, Cap'n Carter," was the dazed reply—"ter lether was found—"

"I see. Well, perhaps the little service I have done may make her think more kindly of her half-brother's tool and accomplice, Rundel, to get rid of me, drugged and 'shanghied' me on a China bound ship. I left her—got into bad company, and now, as you see, am in worse. Tell her from me that I wish her well. Goodby."

Before Carl could command his speech, Carter sprang aboard his vessel—the grapples were cast off, the sweeps manned, and the lorcha was again on her way, with the rupees of old Wah Lee in the hold.

Her course was southerly, and by the dawn of another day, aided by an upspringing breeze, she reached the lee of one of the large islands of the Solomon group.

A boat was lowered, and Blasco ordered into it.

"Going to set me ashore, eh?" he said, half insolently, "well, I do not object."

"No, I suppose not," was Carter's dry response, "and probably the islanders won't either. They're the worst kind of cannibals and particularly fond of white flesh. You're sort of a half-breed—but that won't matter."

Blasco swore, implored, and threatened by turns as the boat was pushed off by half a dozen of the crew, armed to the teeth.

"It isn't half you deserve," said Carter, sternly. "I know your first record pretty well, and this last villainy aboard the *Petrel* puts the finishing touch to it. *Bon voyage!*"

Half an hour later, unfortunate Blasco found himself surrounded by a crowd of rejoicing natives, with filed teeth and excellent appetites, who escorted him up to their village, near at hand, with loud and continuous rejoicing.

CHAPTER XIX.

JACK'S ADVENTURES.

And Jack—poor Jack—what of him all this time?

Well, he remembers concerning himself up to a certain point.

That is, of lying on a swaying, drifting platform, which arose and fell on the languid swells, with his face upturned to the cloudless sky, too full for the time of agonized apprehension as to the ultimate fate of the helpless females left on board the *Petrel* to fully realize his own terrible situation.

Between the affray itself and the rough handling of the Malays, who had placed him on the raft, Jack's shirt had been literally stripped from the upper part of his body.

As the sun climbed higher and higher in the heavens, its burning rays beat down with fierce intensity on the naked flesh, which it soon blistered as with a hot iron.

Merciful unconsciousness through a partial sunstroke came upon him, and he knew no more excepting as one is vaguely aware of certain things in a swoon.

Thus Jack knew that some sort of large craft paddled alongside, and he was lifted on board amid a gabble of tongues unlike anything he had ever heard before.

Again he was conscious of the tremendous rush and roar of breakers, and of being upborne and swept onward to a shore—of feeling himself raised and placed on some sort of rude hand-barrow, and borne rapidly onward.

Then all was a blank in "dead" earnest.

The heavy beating of some sort of native drum seemed to waken Jack from a slumber which he fancied must have lasted a lifetime.

But, strangely enough, not only had the partial paralysis of the brain, brought on by mental and physical suffering, totally disappeared, but with it the veil which had so clouded his mental vision since his appearance on board the *Petrel*.

Everything forgotten in his experience at the Pacific Clubhouse was suddenly recalled—from his first meeting with Rundel, his introduction to Pearl and her aunt, and the succeeding events up to the glass of hot lemonade in the sailor boarding house.

He was lying in a native hut—or house—of peculiar construction. It was some twenty feet square, and perhaps fifteen high, measuring from the ground to the ridgepole of the double sloping roof. The floor, raised four or five feet from the soil, was made of dried canes, bound closely together with split rattan, while the sides were of sago palm saplings, wattled with palm leaves.

There was a cane partition midway dividing the structure into two rooms, either end of the house being left open so that light, air and an uninterrupted view of the miniature world outside was freely afforded.

The furnishings of this curious interior were of a most primitive order. In fact, they consisted solely of a sort of couch of fragrant grasses, over which was thrown the tappa mat on which Jack had been lying, beside which stood an earthen jar of porous clay, containing cooling drink in the shape of palm wine and

lime juice, which Jack drank eagerly as soon as his eye rested on it.

The draught gave him strength and he sat upright.

That he was not a prisoner at least in the sense of enforced confinement—encouraged him to believe that he had fallen into friendly hands. And so, rising with some little difficulty, Jack made his way to the very front, where he sat down on the raised platform, shaded from the burning sunrays by the arching roof overhead; the scene before him was one of seeming peace and tranquillity.

Everywhere was a waving sea of palm trees, surrounding the cleared space in which the village itself stood. Here and there were dense thickets of tropic vegetation, having wondrous growth and luxuriance.

Idling in the shade were men, women and children in different groups, of a bearing and race unlike any that had ever come to Jack's notice.

Some were jetty-black, with mild and pleasing features. Others were of a nut-brown hue, with hair quite long and inclined to crispness rather than a woolly tendency.

A girl suddenly appeared to Jack's astonished eyes, having sprung gracefully upon the platform on which he was sitting.

She might have been anywhere from fifteen to eighteen, for in those tropic climates, development is rapid among the young.

The sole attire of the princess Itola—for this young lady was of royal blood—consisted of a skirt of brilliant-colored feathers, reaching to her knees, while her shapely form, from the slender waist up, was revealed rather than concealed by a close-fitting jacket of bead net-work, through which the smooth flesh gleamed like polished ebony.

If Jack was rather astonished at this unexpected vision, he was still more so when the young girl threw herself at his side, and, without the slightest show of embarrassment, placed one of her finely-molded arms about his neck.

"Me Itola," she said in a musical voice. "You *taka?*" (what or who).

"Jack," returned that young man, who felt that he was blushing tremendously.

"*Namo,*" (good) laughed Itola; "*me spi'k itauna*" (some) "as *Biritani*" (Englishman.) "You like Itola, Jack?"

Poor Jack! The perspiration stood out in beads on his forehead as he saw a score of smiling faces watching this one-sided courtship.

But it would never do to get on the wrong side of this pretty bit of black marble, who, Jack intuitively perceived, was a person of no small importance.

So, with a painful smile, Jack nodded his head.

That settled it. The other arm stole about his neck, and a pair of warm lips were pressed to his own.

"*Itola Jack's tavana,*" she whispered.

And springing to her feet, bounded away, while an appreciative throng, who had assembled at a respectful distance from the platform, followed her, all talking and laughing with great volubility.

"*Tavana.*" I wonder what on earth that means?" was Jack's perplexed query.

And then, remembering to have heard of the kindly affection shown by the simple people inhabiting many of the island groups, Jack decided that *tavana* was a sort of intimation that Itola would be a sister to him, which he had no special objection to.

Then this sudden thought came to him.

"What would Pearl have said to see an exhibition like that?" referring to the embrace, please remember.

But the name itself brought back in full force a remembrance

BRAVE AND BOLD.

of Pearl's perilous situation and all the attendant terrible possibilities, and he groaned aloud.

"Oh," he exclaimed as, rising, he walked to and fro with uncertain step, "if I only knew—if I only knew! And that accursed wretch, Blasco—"

"At your service," said a voice which had a sort of forced mockery in its tone.

Jack started aghast and turned to the partition dividing the hut.

Between the interstices of the canes, he distinguished a human form, while a human face with gleaming eyes was flattened against the latticework.

CHAPTER XX.

BLASCO REAPPEARS.

"Why, Manuel Blasco, I tell you! And who are you?"

Jack could hardly credit his own ears. And yet so much that was strange and unexpected had happened in connection with this remarkable voyage, he began to accept this new "happening" as in line with all the rest.

His first feeling was one of hot anger, suggesting that he tear away the dividing partition and clutch by the throat the man who had wrought such evil to him and his.

"Who am I? I should think you'd ask, after setting me adrift as you did from the *Petrel* to die of thirst and starvation?"

Blasco uttered an ejaculation.

"You are Tom? Your voice is the same, but Tom's face was dark—you're white as milk?"

It was Jack's turn to be amazed. He glanced down at his hands and half-exposed arms. The sun's heat had blistered and scorched the skin so that, as he afterward knew, it had fairly peeled from his flesh as he lay tossing in delirium, while a cooling wash, applied by Itola herself, had done the rest.

"The scoundrels who shanghaied me in 'Frisco stained my face and arms," Jack briefly explained. And then his wrath boiled over again.

"What have you done with those helpless women, you infernal fiend?" he demanded.

"What have they done with me, you had better ask," was the sullen response. "Shot down two of my men like dogs and wounded another—drove us from the *Petrel*'s deck, and now here I am a prisoner, with the pleasant prospect of—"

"Then they are safe," Jack exultantly exclaimed.

"Safe—yes, and on their way to Calcutta—curses on the luck."

Little by little he drew from Blasco a tolerably clear account of all that had transpired after he himself had been set adrift on the raft, though it was hard for Jack to believe it could be true.

He was just beginning to inquire concerning the strange action of the captain of the lorcha, when Blasco interrupted him:

"And you. I suppose old Koikoi's war-canoe picked you up. Through the partition, I watched them bringing you in. Red, like a boiled lobster, and yelling as with delirium tremens, you raved and tore so they tied you at first. Through it all Itola was by you day and night. Lucky dog!"

"Lucky—how?" returned Jack, in unaffected surprise. "I suppose," he went on, growing very red, "you saw—er—her a little while ago, when she said, as nearly as I can make out, that she would be a sister to me?"

"Sister! 'Tavana' means wife—not sister. She's taken a fancy for a white husband. Itola isn't a cannibal, like the rest of them—she was converted by a native missionary a year or two ago. So she won't love you well enough to eat you, anyway. That's what they're going to do with me, though, as soon as I'm fat enough."

"What are you trying to stuff me with?" was Jack's inelegant response.

"I'm not stuffing you—I've told you the truth. It's myself that's being stuffed—with roast pig, poi, and everything else that will fatten. And I must eat or starve."

Blasco uttered a sort of groan at the cheerful prospect suggested by his concluding words.

It all seemed so incredible that for a moment Jack could not reply. Cannibals? Surely, this pleasant-featured, ease-loving people, could not be given over to such a monstrous practice?

"But you don't seem to be tied or bound in any way. If you fear such a fate, why not escape?"

"Escape! With half a dozen big fellows lying around the building night and day? And every one armed with a spear or a club. Small chance, I should think."

Jack had noticed two or three brawny, half-naked savages armed as mentioned, lolling in the shade near the hut, but had no idea that they were keeping watch and ward. And a new fear arose in his mind.

What if, despite Blasco's insinuations regarding Itola's "intentions," he—Jack—was destined to a similar fate? And he made a remark to that effect.

"Don't fear," disconsolately returned Blasco, "you're all right. I know enough of the language for that. I've sailed this part of the Pacific before."

"Kidnapping natives and running them to Honolulu at so much a head, I believe. If these islanders knew it, I don't wonder they're getting ready to eat you."

This was not a kindly speech, but the remembrance of Blasco's reputation, added to his villainy as to the affair on board the *Petrel*, made Jack forget himself for the moment.

Blasco growled out an inarticulate reply, and thinking the talk had continued long enough, Jack turned away.

"You don't offer to help a fellow in distress, I notice," called Blasco, gruffly.

Jack was tempted to make a very different reply from that he did.

"If I can," he said, quietly, "I will help you to the best of my ability."

There was no chance for further speech. Through the canes Jack saw two of Blasco's jailers bringing in some savory-smelling roast pig on a bark platter.

And the odor reminded Jack for the first time that he himself was faint with hunger.

Another pull at the palm-wine braced him up, and assuming as unconcerned an air as he could, Jack walked out.

Not the slightest hindrance was offered to his exit by the outer guards. Indeed, they, as also the scattered groups on every side, seemed to regard him with something like respectful admiration—especially the younger among the females. And many of them were as shapely of limb and regular of feature as Itola, who just then emerged from the more pretentious structure occupied by her father, old Koikoi, and his wives. Now Jack's outward attire was decidedly primitive. In place of his tattered shirt he wore, thrown loosely over his shoulders, a sort of cloak of jappa cloth, which he had found at his bedside. He was bareheaded and barefooted as well.

Itola beckoned him smilingly inside the royal dwelling. Grass mats divided the interior into sections, and behind them Jack could hear feminine voices scolding or laughing. Once or twice the corner of a mat was lifted high enough to disclose a smiling, dark face, and eyes full of childish curiosity.

As Itola explained—partly in pantomime, partly in her pretty, broken way, eked out by the native dialect—old man Koikoi was

temporarily absent. And Itola had designs upon the wardrobe of her respected sire.

From pegs at one side of the room into which Jack was conducted hung a motley collection of garments. There were soldiers' red coats, with tarnished gold braid; old-time swallow-tails, eruptive with brass buttons; army trousers—the blue and the gray—hung peacefully side by side; a gorgeous crimson plush vest, which might have been worn by the lord mayor's butler; plug hats and battered pith helmets, and so on.

For half the second-hand clothing from Shoreditch, or Petticoat Lane, in London, as well as from the Bowery in New York, eventually falls into the hands of the traders of the South Pacific, who exchange them at a profit of a few hundred per cent. for cobra, pearl and turtle shells, and the like.

From this varied assortment, Jack managed to select a brilliant-hued flannel shirt and a partly-worn suit of serge. A straw hat and even a pair of low shoes completed quite a respectable outfit—considering that it came from the wardrobe of a "King of the Cannibal Islands."

"Mai" (come), "Jack," called Itola, in her musical voice, as she met him at the entrance.

And, taking Jack's hand in her own small, brown one, she led him, looking rather sheepish, he thinks, away from the picturesque collection of huts.

CHAPTER XXI.

AMONG CANNIBALS.

If there is an earthly paradise, it is to be found in the island groups lying within four or five degrees of the equator.

For here is an almost perpetual summer, where the hurricane months are comparatively unknown. The torrid heat, even at noonday, is tempered by the sea breeze, that brings on its wings the perpetual murmur of the surf beating with cool suggestions on the coral beach.

In a small open glade overhung with immense fern-trees and gayly blossoming hibiscus, was a pool of clear, limpid water, fed by subterranean springs. It was fringed on one side by water lilies, both pink and white, which loaded the air with fragrance.

Uttering a merry laugh, Itola conducted Jack to the brink of the pool.

"Itai" (look), she said.

The smooth surface reflected the faces and forms bending over them with mirror-like fidelity; and Jack gave a little exclamation.

Not, however, at the contrast between two peculiar types of good looks, but at his own changed visage.

For the gypsyish coloring—made more lasting, as was afterward known, by the addition of nitrate of silver—had disappeared through the peeling off of the outer cuticle, leaving the clear white beneath, which, of course, was as yet untinged by tan.

In addition, his hair had grown long, and a by no means unbecoming mustache was budding out. And it is no wonder that the reflected face before him seemed like that of an utter stranger.

When Jack had looked his fill, Itola led him back to the paternal residence, where a bountiful meal was served for Jack's special benefit, after which Itola's novel though innocent courtship was renewed, as indeed it was on each succeeding day, greatly to his perplexity and even his secret annoyance.

For while many a bold sailor boy would deem himself lucky in being looked upon with loving eyes by dark-skinned Itola, Jack wasn't that kind of a boy.

Pearl was the only woman in the world for him, even if his sense of honor and uprightness had not been what it was; and

how under the sun to escape the proposed matrimonial alliance was his continual study by day and night.

To add to his perplexity, Jack, who every day was picking up a word here and a word there of the language, had contrived to find out that at the wind-up of the marriage festivities, Blasco was to be served up in the highest style of the cannibalistic cuisine. That is—if he was fat enough.

Vainly did Jack try to plead with Itola, as well as with his prospective father-in-law regarding the horrible sacrifice.

Both in their several ways admitted the distaste they felt that once a year at least the old barbaric custom was renewed—the victim generally being some unfortunate from a neighboring island on unfriendly terms with the Amatus—Amatu being the name of the group of which Koikoi was prime ruler.

Yet both were equally powerless in the matter; Koikoi hinted not only that off would come his head if he attempted to interfere, but in addition, he and Itola might be made practical illustration of the very custom they would abolish.

Further speech with Blasco was gently prohibited, and Jack was given quarters in a brand-new hut near the prime ruler's headquarters. It was quite extravagantly furnished—with a hammock, a stool and a sea chest—the two latter being possible relics of some wreck of other days.

Well, it was a dreamy, lotus-eating kind of life—just such as would suit an indolent, sensuous temperament. In these tropic isles of the sea there is no need to take thought for the morrow as to what ye shall eat or drink or wherewithal ye shall be clothed.

The sea abounds in fish, the soil brings forth fruit almost spontaneously and the palm furnishes cooling beverages.

And tailor's or dressmaking bills are not known, as, in fact, dress is conspicuous by its absence.

But to Jack's active, energetic temperament, every day was forty-eight hours long. And most of the time was spent in secretly planning—or trying to plan—how to escape from his island environment and the blandishments of his Intended bride, who, fortunately, had not the slightest conception of Jack's state of mind.

But how to effect an escape—that was the conundrum!

Itola was his shadow. Like Mary's little lamb, she was "sure to go" everywhere Jack did.

She followed him among the hills, and to the shore where the native canoes and proas lay hauled up or anchored in the smooth lagoon which lay inside the circling barrier reef against which the surf forever dashed and beat, excepting at the narrow opening where alone was ingress or exit.

The shore itself was Jack's favorite resort. Partly because here he could sit with his eyes fixed on the western horizon and in fancy bridge over the thousand or two miles of island-studded ocean between himself and Pearl, who he knew had probably reached her father's home in Calcutta. And in part, because of the moored canoes and flying proas. For only in one of these could Jack ever hope to make his escape.

Yet here again Jack was troubled. Despite Blasco's villainy, how could he leave him to his terrible fate without at least making an attempt to liberate him? As for allowing Blasco to unite with him in his half-projected plans, that Jack decided against most emphatically.

Jack and Itola were sitting side by side a little way up from the shore under the shade of a group of sago palms.

It was high noon. The sea breeze, soft and languorous, just ruffled the blue expanse where the sails of half a dozen canoes were visible outside the roof. The warm, sensuous air was drowsy with the murmur of the surf.

BRAVE AND BOLD.

One of Itola's plump arms had stolen timidly about Jack's neck. Timidly, I say, because Jack had not shown himself by any means an ardent lover. In fact, he seemed rather averse to love-making either by word or act.

By this time, Itola, who had a wonderful aptitude for picking up the language, could chatter "pigeon English" with considerable fluency, while on his own part Jack had acquired a goodly number or words of the Amatu dialect. So, between the two, they contrived to keep up quite a conversation.

"Vanaka" (day after to-morrow), "Jack, me your tavana" (wife), she whispered, placing her ripe lips so near Jack's that he did what most men would be tempted to do under like circumstances. And as Itola nestled a little closer, Jack, yielding to the exigencies of the situation, threw his arm about her supple waist.

"Eh—what?" he exclaimed, rousing himself from a brief abstraction.

Itola rather poutingly repeated her suggestive remark. And Jack felt her heart beating with quicker pulsations as she drew herself still more closely to him.

"Oh, thunder!" was his involuntary exclamation.

He had been putting the evil day off as far as possible. But Itola and Papa Koikoi, evidently becoming tired of delay in so important a matter, had taken it into their own hands.

"What 'oh, t'under' mean, Jack?"

"Mean?" repeated Jack, recovering himself. "Oh, it means—that—Jack is glad of it."

Jack's conscience gave him an awful twinge as he said this. Itola bent her dark eyes on his face thoughtfully.

"Jack not look glad."

Jack at once tried to do so. And with better success.

Then both remained silent for a few moments watching an incoming proa which, with its triangular mat sail inflated by the gentle breeze, came gliding through the opening in the reef with a swiftness almost incredible considering the light wind.

"That Hinau," exclaimed Itola, without raising her head from Jack's shoulder. "Him come from motumotu" (the islands) "over there."

And she pointed languidly at a hazy outline in the far distance.

"Who is Hinau?" Jack asked, carelessly, as an athletic young savage, followed by two others, sprang from the beached canoe.

CHAPTER XXII.

JACK'S ESCAPE.

Itola smiled roguishly.

"Him want Itola for wife. Itola no want him—want Jack. Make Hinau mad."

An emphatic wish that Itola had smiled on Hinau's suit, crossed Jack's mind. And then Jack himself smiled on Hinau's suit—though in a more literal sense.

Indeed, suit is a rather extravagant term to use. Yet it was suited to the climate.

For the young islander's crisp top-knot was surmounted by an old fatigue cap; about his neck was a necklace of knuckle-bones and jaw teeth—presumably those of his enemies, while for the rest, he wore a pair of shrunken and dingy buckskin breeches that perhaps had belonged to some English jockey.

This much Jack noticed as the newcomer approached, swinging an unpleasant-looking club studded with sharks' teeth in one sinewy hand, as a European fop might swing a cane.

It made it very embarrassing to Jack. For Itola, instead of drawing away from Jack, drew, if possible, a little nearer, and threw her other arm about his neck. All of which would have been agreeable only for the presence of a third party.

And the third party in question decorated his features with a melodramatic scowl, which was made additionally unpleasant by the blue tattooing up and down the sides of his forehead.

Then he said something rapidly in his own tongue, having reference to Jack, as was evident by the savage look bent upon the latter.

Itola replied in what Jack thought was a rather triumphant tone, after which Hinau strode away in the direction of the village.

Jack rather impatiently unclasped Itola's arms from his neck.

He had never seen any craft, during his sojourn in the Southern seas, like the one Hinau had landed from, and motioning Itola to come, walked down to the water's edge for a closer examination.

For this was the true "flying proa" of the ladrones, only on a smaller scale.

The hulls—for there were two—consisted of hollowed logs, some eighteen feet long, pointed at either end like a whaleboat.

These, side by side, with some four feet between them, were held thus by a cross-bar lashed to the gunwales at both bow and stern.

Extending outward was a heavy out rigger, whose weight itself more than counterbalanced the pressure of wind against the big triangular mat sail.

In each canoe was an arching house or cabin thatched with pandanus leaves—one for stores and the other furnishing sleeping accommodations. A wide-bladed carved paddle in a bracket at the stern served as a rudder.

"Proa go fast like laihi" (wind)—"Amatu proa not same fast," said Itola.

From which Jack gathered that Hinau's was a "clipper," as compared with those belonging to the island of Amatu.

Jack made some careless reply, while he sighed involuntarily as he thought of himself on board such a swift-sailing craft, flying over the seas in the direction of some civilized port. For the announcement that his wedding day was so near at hand had made Jack long more than ever for freedom.

The two were unusually silent as they walked slowly back to the village. The train of Jack's thoughts I have just hinted at—Itola's were best known to herself.

Possibly she was contrasting Hinau's ardent devotion with the coldness of her white fiancé, who seemed to fight shy of even so simple a show of affection as walking hand-in-hand. And possibly she was thinking how she might punish Jack a little, after the coquettish manner of her sex, by arousing his jealousy. For she left Jack's side rather abruptly as they reached old Koikoi's dwelling, where the young chief was being entertained by a small concourse of the villagers, to whom he seemed well known, and immediately began bestowing a series of winning smiles on her own lover, who soon withdrew from the group about him. Joining Itola, the two walked away in the direction of the miniature lake on the outskirts of the settlement.

Some of the young girls looked after them laughingly, while others regarded Jack left thus alone as though they would be very willing to supply the place of fickle Itola.

But Jack only shrugged his shoulders, and as the soft twilight began to descend, strolled listlessly in the direction of the hut where Blasco was a prisoner.

Now, by this time, Jack was regarded with favor and even respect by most of the natives, not only by reason of his coming marriage with Itola, but the added probability of his succeeding old Koikoi in the near future as their ruler.

So that as Jack drew near, the guards, who were lolling listlessly in the shade, offered no seeming opposition.

Blasco sat crouched on the platform, the figure of obese, sullen despair. He seemed to have gained a good twenty pounds in

BRAVE AND BOLD.

27

weight since his imprisonment. And Jack noticed one of the native guards, with a hungry look, smacking his thick lips whenever he glanced in Blasco's direction.

"I wish I could help you, Blasco," said Jack, earnestly—for none of those about the hut understood a word of English—"but I haven't the least idea how to attempt it. Indeed, I'd give the world to get away myself."

"Bah!" was the growling response—"that yarn is to tell the marines. Much one must want to get away with the prospect of Itola and a half-dozen more good-looking wives when old Koikoi dies, to say nothing of taking his place as ruler of the island."

"That sort of thing might suit you—it don't me," sharply returned Jack.

"Ah! I'd like to have the chance of trying it," returned Blasco, with a groan; "but, instead, I have to furnish part of the material for your wedding feast. And that is what I call infernal hard."

Jack wanted to laugh, but he knew it was no laughing matter for Blasco. Yet, rack his brains as he might, he could think of no plan by which to free himself or Blasco from their several fates.

"So you will not try to do anything to help me?" suddenly demanded Blasco, rising to his feet.

"I told you that my will is good enough, but I am powerless," was Jack's only reply.

"Then by Heaven I will help myself! Anything is better than being baked."

Before Jack dreamed the desperate man's intention, Blasco sprung from the platform, and seizing a spear from the nearest guard, thrust him through in an instant. Snatching up a heavy club from the earth, Blasco struck down another man; and before the remaining one had fairly recovered from his surprise, dashed into the thick underbrush with a maniacal yell, which was echoed by a score of savage voices.

The whole village was in an uproar; torches flashed hither and thither, and the shrieking, excited natives came rushing to the spot.

The remaining guard, shouting something unintelligible to Jack, rushed rapidly in the direction taken by Blasco, which was toward the neighboring hills. Almost the entire male community followed, leaving Jack standing dazed and bewildered by the suddenness of the entire affair.

He was aroused from his half stupefaction by the hasty approach of Hinau, who, for reasons best known to himself, had not joined in the chase.

Hinau meant business, but not of a warlike nature, as was evident from his pacific smile. His English was imperfect, yet to the point.

"Biratani" (Englishman, or white) "run; why not you run? You take Hinau proa. Go away. Hinau marry Itola."

Volumes could not have said more. To simply slay his white rival would be to incur Itola's hatred. But if Itola understood that Jack had deserted her of his own free will, why, then Hinau's chances were decidedly favorable.

It did not take Jack long to decide. Yet so contradictory a creature is man that Jack felt a half pang at the thought of resigning Itola to his savage rival even with the prospect of escape open before him.

And as though to add to his regret, Itola herself, her dark eyes heavy with the slumber from which she had been aroused by the uproar, suddenly approached them.

"Utanata" (what is it), "Jack?"

And, regardless of Hinau's presence, Itola favored Jack with one of her frequent caresses such as most men would by no means object to.

Gently untwining the girl's round arms from his neck, Jack, casting a significant look at Hinau, kissed Itola's tempting lips for the last time.

"*Vakoi-lao, matruta*" (good-night—go back to slumber), "Itola," he whispered, as Hinau hastily explained the cause of the commotion.

And Itola obediently obeyed, throwing back a laughing salute as she ran fleetly back to old Koikoi's dwelling.

The shouts and cries of the savages scattered through the dense growth surrounding the village warned Jack not to tarry.

"*Mai, laulao*" (come, I am ready—let us go), he said, in low tones.

Hinau nodded expressively and led the way to the shore.

Rousing his two followers, who were asleep in the stern, Hinau spoke rapidly in his own tongue.

Both returned a readily submissive acquiescence.

Hinau grasped Jack's hand warmly and motioned him into the proa. The huge sail was noiselessly hoisted, the coir fast cast off, and the proa headed through the little fleet of native craft toward the opening in the reef easily distinguished by the phosphorescence of the breaking surf on either hand.

Hinau waved a farewell, and turning, hurried up from the beach. Not a moment too soon, either. For scarcely was his form swallowed up in the gloom, when a chorus of deafening yells announced that the tide of pursuit had for some reason turned toward the shore; and a moment later the strand was alight with flickering torches.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ABOARD A FLYING PROA.

Talk of the speed of a clipper! The renowned *Flying Scud*, with her record of four hundred miles in twenty-four hours, could not have caught up with the flying proa, once fairly under way with a leading wind.

The land breeze, which had wafted the proa beyond the reef, was light; and before they were fairly outside the surf-beaten circle, half a dozen proas, hastily manned and started in pursuit, told Jack that in some way his own escape had been discovered.

But the land breeze gave place to the steady, strong breath of the monsoon.

Swifter and swifter over the long swells sped the flying proa through the yielding darkness, till her speed was something almost frightful to contemplate as one glanced at the foam rushing past.

Yet the shallow draught and lightness of the tree-trunks, from which the double hull was hollowed, made the proa wonderfully buoyant. She seemed to fairly skim the surface, while never a drop of water came in over the low sides.

Astern were some pin-head points of light that told of torches in the prows of pursuing proas, but it was evident that Hinau's craft was out-sailing them two to one.

The lithe, half-naked savage in the helm, who wielded the steering-paddle, grinned suggestively as he glanced astern, and knowing that he was safe from any danger of being overtaken, Jack, who was feeling the reaction after so much excitement, stretched himself on a pile of mats in the bottom; but it was a long time before sleep visited his eyes.

He lay staring up at the brilliant constellations, wondering whether the strange and bewildering events of the past week were not indeed the fanciful visions of a brain in part disordered by the drug that had been given him.

Side by side there appeared to his mental vision the fair face of Pearl, whom he loved, and the dark, regular features of Itola, whom he did not love.

BRAVE AND BOLD.

"I hope Hinau will be kind to her," he said, with a half sigh, as he recalled the peaceful if indolent hours spent in the company of the pretty semi-savage, who had given him the strength of her young affections.

And then dismissing poor Itola from mind with something of an effort, Jack began trying to forecast the future with Pearl—his own Pearl—as the central object.

He knew from the position of the Southern Cross by which the proa's course was guided that they were standing about S. S. W.—a course which would take the proa directly across the Corál Sea to the eastern coast of Australia.

Jack, of course, was aware that this would bring them in the track of steamers or sailing vessels bound to Brisbane or Sydney, and his hope was that he could be transferred to the deck of some one of them—no matter whither bound—so he could once more be among his own race and listen to his own language.

As soon as possible he would reach Calcutta—he felt sure of a chance of working his passage thither if he could only get on board a P. and O. steamer bound to India from Melbourne.

You naturally ask, what then? He had neither money nor, apparently, prospects. But Jack had, after a severe mental struggle, resolved to eat humble pie.

Up to the time of meeting Pearl Rundel he had not cared—in deed, he had rather preferred his adventurous, drifting, Bohemian existence for its very excitement. But knowing Pearl, the world was changed for him. He had an object in life. And with a smile Jack thought how surprised she would be when he came to make known certain facts concerning himself.

And so, while these manifold conflicting thoughts flitted through his brain, Jack fell asleep.

It was not the broad shaft of sunlight striking his face that awoke him, so much as an astonished exclamation from one of the two natives at the stern.

Jack started up, rubbing his eyes. Where on earth—and then he remembered himself. But who on earth—who but Blasco himself!

It was indeed that disreputable individual who, sitting in the open end of one of the arched cabins I have described, bowed with mock politeness.

"*Buenos días,*" he said, showing his white teeth—"it is a surprise I have given you, eh?"

"Yes. A disagreeable one," bluntly returned Jack, as soon as he could recover himself. For the unexpected presence of the man with whom such a record of villainy was connected brought back Jack's feelings of dislike, and even detestation, in full force. As a prisoner, Jack had felt a half pity for him—now it was something very different.

"Ah, but you cannot help yourself," was the sneering reply. "Indeed, it is I that have cause of complaint. I doubled on the savages after leading them a dance toward the hills, and hid away in the proa here. I meant to get her off as soon as it was safe. Then I heard you with that fool Hinau—the rest you know."

Jack, vexed and nonplussed, made no response.

"But there is no need to quarrel." Blasco went on, with a change of tone and manner that might or might not be affected. "You were fool enough to leave pretty Itola—that is your affair, of course. Now I propose that. But stop—"

Turning to the helmsman, Blasco suddenly asked:

"Speak English, *manis?*" (friend).

A stolid look and a shake of the head was the only response.

The other was similarly questioned with a like result.

"*Bueno!* As I was going to say, these fellows are worth at least fifty pounds a head for hiring out. Any Australian planter will give that. They contract to work them five years and then

send them back to their island with a big present. But—I never heard of any being sent back."

Blasco paused to utter an unpleasant laugh. Jack kept his temper by a tremendous effort.

"And you propose—"

"To run them—or let them run us in the proa—to Brisbane. There's grub and water aboard to last a fortnight. I know a party in Brisbane that I've had dealings with before, in the same line. He'll take them off our hands and keep everything quiet. The proa will bring something as a curiosity. We'll have the proceeds and be in funds again. What do you say?"

"I say," deliberately returned Jack, "that you're even a bigger scoundrel than I thought you, to dare hint at such a thing!"

Blasco's face took on the malignant look Jack had seen there before.

His muscular fingers involuntarily clinched, as though he was tempted to spring at the bold speaker and strangle him.

But he made no reply—only sat mutely glaring at Jack, as though uncertain what course to take. A sudden thought seemed to occur to him.

"So that is your answer. I think you will be sorry for it, though," he said.

Then, turning to the savages, Blasco began addressing them with tolerable fluency in the Amatu dialect.

Jack understood a word here and there, and to his horror he made out that Blasco was trying to induce them, by the offer of a large money reward, to be paid on arrival at Brisbane, to put Jack ashore on some of the many uninhabited coral islets which had begun to jut the sea at far intervals.

As he finished, Pipu, the helmsman, nodded and gave an acquiescent grunt, which was echoed by his companion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BLASCO IS TRAPPED.

As soon as he could recover from the shock of his discovery, Jack, as far as his limited knowledge of the language would permit, vainly appealed to the dusky savages in his own behalf.

But whether his broken and illy-connected speech failed to convey his meaning, or because they were swayed by Blasco's tempting offer, or from whatever reason, neither gave the slightest heed to Jack's entreaties.

"You understand the language better than I had thought," said Blasco, with his sneering smile; "but it avails nothing. Manuel Blasco generally gets his own ends served in the long run. I told you you would be sorry. And see, I kill two birds with one stone. I get rid of you and have all the money for the sale of my two blackbirds, instead of halving it."

There was murder in Jack's heart just then.

And a foreshadowing of this was in his eyes that bent themselves so fiercely on Blasco as to cause him to draw back involuntarily.

"It is lucky for you that there is neither knife or pistol in reach!" exclaimed Jack, bitterly. "Coward! murderer! and kidnaper that you are."

"Hard words break no bones. I have the whip hand, Tom, or Jack, or whatever your name is. The good luck that's served you so far will hardly pull you through this time, I think."

With this pleasing remark, Blasco brought from the little cabin some baked fish wrapped in plantain leaves, which, with a roll of cassava bread, he placed within reach.

"Better eat while you can," he genially remarked, as he began suiting the action to the word. "The reef yonder where I pur-

pose leaving you, my young friend, don't look as though it would support life for very long."

It did not indeed. Imagine for yourself an irregular mass of coral, elevated some ten feet above the sea in its highest part, perhaps half an acre in extent, and as devoid of anything like vegetation as a marble slab. On every side the fretting surf, and as far as the eye could reach, the heaving sea, undotted by a single sail.

"I won't gratify a monster like you by asking my life at your hands," said Jack, as calmly as he could, "but remember this much—such crimes as yours are punished sooner or later, by God if not by man."

"God, man or the devil—I fear none of them," was the blasphemous response, accompanied by a contemptuous shoulder shrug. "Now, will you step quietly on the reef as the proa runs alongside, or shall we assist you?—a trifle roughly, perhaps."

With a sweep of the paddle Patu brought the buoyant craft close to the lee side of the reef—so near that one could jump upon a projecting spur.

Both natives arose. Blasco did the same.

With despair and rage striving for the mastery in his heart, Jack stood erect with one foot on the side.

Suddenly, with what was evidently a preconcerted movement, Patu and his companion seized Blasco, one on either side, and before he could have the slightest conception of their purpose, half pushed, half pitched him into the mimic line of surf which beat against the projecting reef.

To save himself from drowning, Blasco clutched frantically at the coral and drew himself thereon, uttering the most frightful oaths and execrations.

Snatching up the paddle he had dropped, Patu pushed the proa away from the islet with the quickness of thought, while Jack, for the moment completely paralyzed at this unexpected turning of the tables, stood staring from the two back to Blasco, who, dancing up and down in his rage, was turning the air quite blue with profanity.

As the sail, hauled around in place, began to fill, Patu put his hand to his mouth, and shouted:

"Mori—me, too, spik Englis'. Me 'stand' (understand), "too. You not sell me for gold, same you done my brudder two year 'go. How you like, eh?"

Thus was Manuel Blasco caught in his trap.

Jack's feeble expostulation in the other's behalf was made to deaf ears, and in his secret heart Jack felt as though the wretch had met a deserved fate, as he listened to Patu's after narration.

For Patu, who had sailed in a trading schooner and afterward on board a whaler, easily made himself intelligible, as did his companion, who attended a mission school on his native island.

Manuel Blasco's name was known and execrated as a native kidnaper all through the Solomon Islands.

Patu's own brother had been among his victims, and when it was known that Blasco was a prisoner on Amatu, with a prospect of being killed and eaten, great was the rejoicing in neighboring groups.

The two had been asleep when he stole aboard the proa, the evening before, and had not known of his presence until his sudden showing that morning.

Pretending an utter ignorance of English, they had understood everything and prepared to act accordingly.

As Patu finished his story, Jack looked back.

Sharply outlined against the azure of the sky stood the tall form of Blasco, with one arm upraised as though calling down curses.

The dark figure, the white coral, the sapphire sea with its creamy line of foam at the base of the reef, made a picture never to be forgotten.

"Some passing vessel will surely see him and take him off," said Jack, turning away with a half shudder.

Patu smiled grimly.

"Guess not," he replied, glancing back over his shoulder; "many *resf* here—*tradin'* vessel no come. Sometime maybe proa or prahu, but no hab much chance."

And to this day no one shall say whether Blasco's bones, bleached to the whiteness of the coral itself, are scattered on the lone islet, or whether, rescued by some strange chance, he still pursues his career of crime in other lands. Certain it is that Jack never again laid eyes on Manuel Blasco.

Jack soon discovered that his two dusky friends had strict orders from Hinau, their chief, to carry him to any port on the eastern coast of Australia that he might decide upon, or if he so preferred, to put him on board such vessel or steamer as might heave in sight. And in all things they were to obey Jack as they would Hinau himself—which command they carried out to the fullest extent.

It was a strange yet delightful experience while it lasted. The proa itself flying with an easy, undulating motion over the summer sea. The following breeze never varying half a point either way. The strange chants of the two natives, who took turns at steering, and at cooking over a fire built in a pan of clay in the bows.

In a calm, which happened once or twice, they secured a large turtle asleep on the surface. Bonito and albicore were caught on a twisted bark line, to which was attached a bone hook trailing many fathoms astern. So that their fare, if not sumptuous, was appetizing. Taro, yam and plantain, boiled or baked, eked out the bill of fare, with fruit for dessert.

On, and still on, without compass or chart, guided only by the stars at night, and some strange intuition of its helmsman by day, sped the proa.

"Maybe we see land 'morrow night," was Patu's simple observation, as Jack crawled under his covering and extended himself on his mat-couch after one of these halcyon days which, though delightful, were growing a bit monotonous.

But the lofty Wallaby range of the Australian coast did not after all greet the eyes of the voyagers.

For on the following, never-to-be-forgotten morning upon which Jack opened his eyes, the sun, just peeping over the verge of the horizon, tinged with crimson and gold the black hull and low, raking smoke-stacks of a sharp-bowed iron steamer heading due east.

But as the proa was seen the steamer's course was changed a couple of points. As she neared, the engines slowed down and those on board seemed to await the proa's approach.

Jack's heart beat like a trip-hammer as, communicating his wish to Patu, their seemingly clumsy craft was cleverly laid alongside—a step-ladder being lowered for the accommodation of Jack, who, standing in the proa's bow, signified his wish to come aboard.

Jack ran lightly up the ladder. It was early morning, and no one was visible about the decks excepting the watch washing down under direction of the bo'sun; an officer stood on the bridge, and a stout, good-natured looking man, whom Jack knew to be the commander, was standing at the gangway.

BRAVE AND BOLD.

CHAPTER XXV.

JACK TELLS WHO HE IS.

The sudden transition from the interior of a South Pacific proa to the deck of a stanch, seagoing iron steamer flying the cross of St. George, was so confusing that for a brief moment Jack stood staring about him, unable to frame any connected speech.

"Well, my lad?"

The half-humorous—half-inquiring tone of Commander Blossom recalled Jack's wandering wits.

"I beg your pardon, sir; what steamer please, and where bound?"

"*Euterpe*. Blossom, master, on a cruise to the eastward."

To the eastward? That was somewhat vague. Yet sooner or later there would be a return to a civilized port. And it occurred to Jack that he had better make sure of present opportunities.

"Will you take me aboard and let me work my passage to—wherever you are going? I will explain later."

Captain Blossom looked Jack over, glanced at his half-worn, faded suit of serge, and then at the proa, which, with sail half lowered, lay rising and falling on the swells a little way off.

"Why, yes. Only I'm blessed if I understand it."

Jack laughed, and jumping on the low rail, waved his hand to Patu.

"*Launna—ilo, ilo*" (Go on, and good-by), he called, in a clear, ringing voice.

The two waved a farewell, the sail was set, and, close hauled on the wind, the flying proa began her homeward flight.

"Mr. Dall," called Captain Blossom to the officer on the bridge, "signal to start—same course as before—E. S. E."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Again began the steady throbbing of the engines and the beating of the screw as the steamer, with slowly increasing speed, took up her course.

"Shall I go for'ard and turn to, sir?" asked Jack, respectfully.

Captain Blossom hesitated a moment.

"I haven't heard your story yet, my lad; and there's a question or two I want to ask. I fancy, by your knowing the South Sea lingo, that you may have been 'beach-combing' on some of the islands hereabouts. If so, you may be of considerable use as an interpreter and in other ways, instead of going into the forecastle as a common sailor. Step into the outer cabin, and one of the stewards shall bring you coffee. When the after-guard turns out we'll talk this over."

The term "after-guard" is generally applied to the officers living aft, including the commander himself. And in consequence, Jack was rather puzzled to know who was meant.

But he gladly obeyed, and for the first time in weeks enjoyed the luxury of napkins and silver, with the addition of a colored servitor at the back of his chair.

Jack drained his second cup of coffee with a great sigh of satisfaction.

"Where is this steamer owned, steward?" he asked.

"London, sah. One ob dem dukes or princes or somethin'—b'longs to her. Ben a-cruisin' roun' de world. Now she's on one ob de greatest' wil' goose chases eber I heard of."

"Why, how's that?"

The steward, who, like the most of his race, dearly loved to hear himself talk, dropped his voice to a confidential undertone.

"Well, sah, I only j'ined her in Melbourne, so mebbe dunno all de circumstances. But nigh's I find out it's like dis. De nobleman what owns dis yere steam-yacht foller a young lady he dead in lub wid to Hinderstan or somewhere in Injy. But seems she

lubs another feller dat got hisself drowned out here away—least, so dey t'inks. But de lady, she ain't so sure. I hear she had a dream dat her lubber alibe on some islan' in de Coril Sea. So fin'ly she say dis. If dis yere lord—I neber remember his name—will take her and her pa a-cruisin' 'mong de islan's, an' she fin's out there ain't no hopes ob de oder lubber bein' 'live wharsomeber, mebbe she'll marry dis yere duke some day, pervidin', her pa, who is kinder urgin' ob her, keeps on insistin'."

The steward, a naturally voluble functionary, rattled the above off at such railroad speed that Jack hardly caught the connection. In fact, the story sounded so wild and far-fetched that he secretly decided that the steward, whether unwittingly or not, had wildly exaggerated some much simpler narration of facts.

So he only said, half laughingly, that it sounded like a romance, after which Jack returned to the deck.

Captain Blossom had gone back to the bridge, where he stood conversing with the first and second officers, who had joined him. Uncertain what to do without further instructions, Jack, finding the quarter-deck deserted, walked aft.

Suddenly a fresh-faced young fellow, with curly, blonde whiskers and an unmistakably English air, came running up the companionway, with a short, briar pipe in his mouth and a Glengarry bonnet set well back on his head.

At the sight of Jack, who had turned, he stopped short and regarded him with an air of calm surprise.

"A—but who are you? And where d'ye come from? And what are you doing on the quarter here? You belong for'ard, don't you know?"

Jack turned very pale as the other thus spoke.

"Yes, Lord Burham," he replied, steadying his voice with an effort, "I presume I do belong for'ard. But Captain Blossom, who took me aboard from a native boat a short time ago, told me to wait till the after-guard had turned out, and—"

"Native boat? You don't tell me!" interrupted Lord Burham, seeming only to have heard that part of Jack's reply. And taking his pipe from his mouth, began:

"See here! you haven't heard of any young fellow, very dark complexion, short, crisp hair, name of Jack—something—being picked up anywhere among the islands hereabouts? If he was," pursued Lord Burham, in half soliloquy, "the chances are that he's eaten and digested by this time—that's one comfort."

Bewildered and amazed as Jack was by the entire affair, he could not help laughing.

"Strange as it may seem, I have heard of something of the sort," he replied, "only I—"

"Then he is—that is—he was cooked! By Jove! Only how will we break it to—"

Lord Burham was suddenly interrupted.

The "frou-frou" of feminine garments in the companionway was followed by the appearance of a pale, beautiful girl, who stepped out on deck.

She turned toward the bow almost instantly, as one whose eyes are strained ahead, searching for something in vain.

Her back was toward Jack, whom she scarcely seemed to have noticed.

Lord Burham stepped nervously to her side.

"Er—Miss Rundel, before we arose this morning, the steamer took a white fellow from a native boat, who—a—I think has—that is—knows something—"

"Where is he?" eagerly demanded Pearl. "Bring him here at once."

Lord Burham swung sharply around.

"Not a word about the baking business," he whispered to Jack, who was standing dumb and motionless, though his heart was beating almost to suffocation; "tell her any other kind of a lie you can make up, and I'll see you're well paid.

"He's here, Miss Rundel," Lord Burham said, awkwardly—"right behind you; you can question him for yourself."

Pearl turned with lightning speed. Her large, dark eyes rested full on Jack's agitated face for an instant. Her lips parted:

"My God! it is—it is Jack himself—my Jack!"

And the young man sprang forward just in time to catch her half-fainting form in his strong arms.

"For Heaven's sake, Lord Burham, what has happened? Pearl, my daughter, speak!"

The voice, a trifle sharp and querulous, came from a white-haired gentleman who had rushed on deck just in time to snatch Pearl's insensible form rather rudely from the shabbily dressed, sea-tanned young man at whom Lord Burham was staring in unaffected dismay.

"It is nothing, father," whispered Pearl, opening her eyes; "I am better. Let me sit a moment in the sea breeze."

And her father assisted her to a reclining chair, to the side of which she swiftly beckoned Jack.

Mr. Rundel, who had the worn look and yellow features peculiar to a European resident of India, turned sharply to Lord Burham.

"Will you be good enough to explain, Lord Burham?"

Lord Burham uttered a hollow groan and picked up his pipe, which had fallen from his mouth.

"Explain? Well, sir, it's—a—something like a fairy story. Why, the young man there is the Jack we've been cruising to get news of."

Mr. Rundel sank limp and colorless into a deck chair.

All the while he had been flattering himself that the search for this wandering Bohemian Pearl seemed so infatuated with would be utterly in vain. Indeed, he had yielded to her importunities more because of this firm belief, than from a desire to please the daughter restored to him after so many years of absence.

"Father—Lord Burham," suddenly cried Pearl, with searching eyes, "this is Jack himself! And such a wonderful story as he has to tell."

"Ah, I don't doubt it," moodily returned Lord Burham, "doosid wonderful, of course."

"Jack—Jack who?" said her father, peevishly, as he stepped forward and eyed the young fellow with manifest disfavor.

But Jack, nothing daunted, briefly told all that had befallen him since being set adrift from the *Petrel's* deck through the villainy of Blasco. That is—nearly all. For obvious reasons he forebore to mention Itola. In fact, I think he prevaricated somewhat. The listeners vaguely got the idea that it was to the favor of old Koikoi rather than his daughter, that Jack owed his safety among the cannibalistic people at Amatu.

Lord Burham was heard to mutter something as Jack finished—"Werry like a whale," it sounded like, whatever the quotation may mean.

Mr. Rundel listened like a man in a dream—an unpleasant dream.

His heart was set on having a scion of noble blood for a son-in-law. And now the whole plan was upset.

For even thus soon he had learned that Pearl's will and indomitable resolution were quite as strong as his own; and, if she had determined to marry this adventurer—for Jack seemed nothing else in Mr. Rundel's eyes—she would do it, and no threat of disinheritance would affect her in the least.

"It is a—an astonishing story," Mr. Rundel said, pulling himself together with an effort. "And now, may I ask your name, Mr.—"

"John Rogers Wrayland Burham, youngest son of Sir Richard Burham, West Chester, England, and brother to Lord Charles, who sits yonder!"

Pearl uttered an exclamation and dropped her lover's hand, which she had been unconsciously holding during his recital. Mr. Rundel looked as though he thought the speaker bereft of reason.

But Lord Charles Burham sprung wildly to his feet.

"Good God—what are you saying?" he hoarsely exclaimed.

Jack, who was very pale, yet outwardly composed, pushed the loose sleeve of his shirt nearly to his shoulder.

"Did you ever see this before, Charlie?" he asked, in rather a tremulous voice, and pointed to two rudely tattooed letters—"J" and "C"—inside a still more rudely executed star.

Lord Burham, who for the moment had forgotten the stoicism peculiar to his race, recovered himself on the instant.

"I ought to remember it, dear boy," he drawled, with the affected indifference which he used to cloak his emotion, "for, by Jove! I did it myself when you was a kid of ten and I fifteen. And didn't Sir Richard give us a jolly wiggling? Jack, dear boy—"

Lord Charles covered a half sob by a great "guffaw," and wrung Jack's extended hand with a heartiness that admitted of no question. Then he turned and stared very hard over the rail at the water rushing past.

"And—our father?" said Jack, gently, as Mr. Rundel and Pearl sat still in amaze too great for words.

"Why—didn't you know?" was his brother's startled reply; "he died two years after you ran away from home, Jack. And his fortune's halved between you and me, Jack—fifty thousand pounds apiece, and the income of the estate."

BRAVE AND BOLD.

But Jack hardly gave heed to the last. His father had never seemed to care for him as for the older son. Indeed, had not always been kind. Yet Jack's heart smote him all the same, and he drew his sleeve roughly across his eyes.

Mr. Rundel's face had undergone a remarkable change since Lord Charles' reply. He extended his hand and congratulations at one and the same time.

And Jack, who understood it perfectly, received both with a quiet smile.

"A—I'm rather stirred up, Jack, dear boy," said Lord Charles, a moment later. "Think I'll go below and study over it a bit. Come down when you're ready—there's a stateroom and clothes, and all that sort of thing at your service."

"All right," dreamily returned Jack, sinking into a chair beside Pearl, whose face was perfectly radiant.

And Mr. Rundel had the good taste to follow Lord Burham's example.

Well, explanations followed thick and fast. On her own part Pearl had to tell of the quick run to Calcutta—of Captain Bolt's marriage to Aunt Maria, the very next day after arrival, and how Carl, the blonde-haired, had sailed for Japan on the same steamer with little Weiho, who calmly announced their own approaching nuptials in the near future.

Then the meeting with her father, and introduction to his high-caste wife, who, as Pearl discovered very soon, was a tartar and a termagant.

She made Mr. Rundel's life a very lively one, and before a week had passed, it was plain that the two women could never live under the same roof.

Lord Burham arrived at Calcutta in his yacht. Mr. Rundel at once recognizing his infatuation for Pearl, gave him every encouragement.

Pearl, believing Jack no longer living, passively allowed herself to drift with the tide.

But a very remarkable dream, too long to be given in detail, impressed it upon Pearl that Jack was alive and living either voluntarily or in captivity on some of the groups not far from where the *Petrel* had been becalmed at the time of the tragedy.

And thus it came about that, by half promising to listen to Lord Burham's suit when she should be convinced that Jack was really no more, he gladly undertook the cruise in search of proof for or against the dream theory.

Mr. Rundel himself was but too glad to accompany his daughter, on the plea that his health would be benefited by the voyage.

Jack's astonishment was too great for words when he learned that the commander of the piratical lorcha was no other than Carter himself. A gunboat had been sent out from Calcutta in search of the lorcha; but in vain, and the rupees were never recovered.

On his own part Jack had abundant detail to narrate, so the time flew by unheeded, till a rather imperative summons from the steward called them to dinner, for both Jack and Pearl had forgotten that such a thing as breakfast was on the tapis at all.

That evening, in the luxuriously furnished cabin, matters were talked over in earnest.

It was finally decided thus. The *Enterpe* would abandon the remainder of a projected trip around the world and return to England after touching at Melbourne for needed supplies.

For there were many business complications before Jack could legally claim his inheritance. And, moreover, he had a secret pride in the thought of taking Pearl and her father to the ancestral estate. For Mr. Rundel decided that his health required a still longer voyage than at first intended. And Pearl—well, you can imagine her own sentiments.

Lord Charles behaved like a trump throughout. He frankly admitted that, as he could not himself win Pearl, he was deuced glad she was going to stay in the family! A feeling which Mr. Rundel doubtless shared in secret.

The entire programme was carried out to the very letter. And to the best of my knowledge and belief the youngest and happiest married couple I have ever had the pleasure of meeting in a somewhat eventful life, are the two whose peculiar experiences and remarkable adventures have been chronicled in this story, which in substance is a true one.

Two years ago I boarded the schooner *Petrel* in the harbor of Boston—Captain Ben Bolt being a distant connection of my own.

I was duly introduced to his good wife, Maria, who invariably accompanies him in his voyaging. From her, as from Captain Ben himself, I gathered many important details, which, in conjunction with those previously furnished by Jack on his honeymoon visit to America, where he was entertained by my uncle, Erastus Cabot, first gave me the idea of the present story.

I happened to mention that these facts, stranger than any fiction, were deserving of a place in print.

"Thought"—I added, laughingly—"I should hardly know what name to give to such a remarkable narrative if I were to write it."

Aunt Maria looked up from a pair of stockings she was knitting for Captain Bolt.

"It takes the wimmin, after all, to think up things," she said, briskly—"tell you what I'd call it."

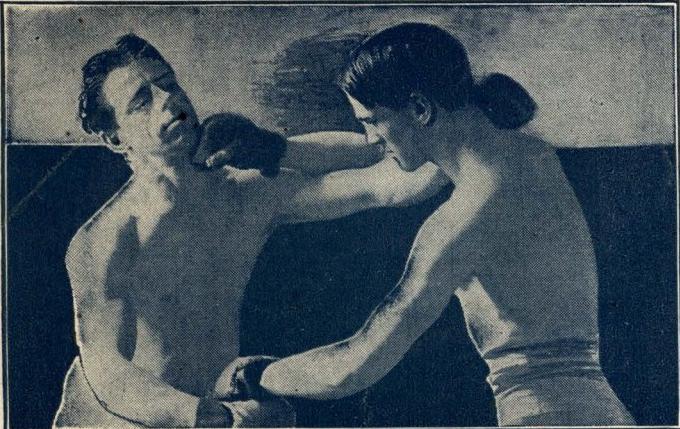
"Well?" I responded, inquiringly.

"Call it," responded Mrs. Benjamin Bolt, with energy: "A Remarkable Voyage; or, The Fortunes of Wandering Jack," which I have resolved to do.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 13, will contain "The Knowlhurst Mystery; or, The Strange Adventures of Leslie Norton," by Frank Sheridan. A boy, who is lost—an orphan—who starts out to see a rich uncle, is wrecked in the South Seas and carried off by a rescuing party to Jamaica.

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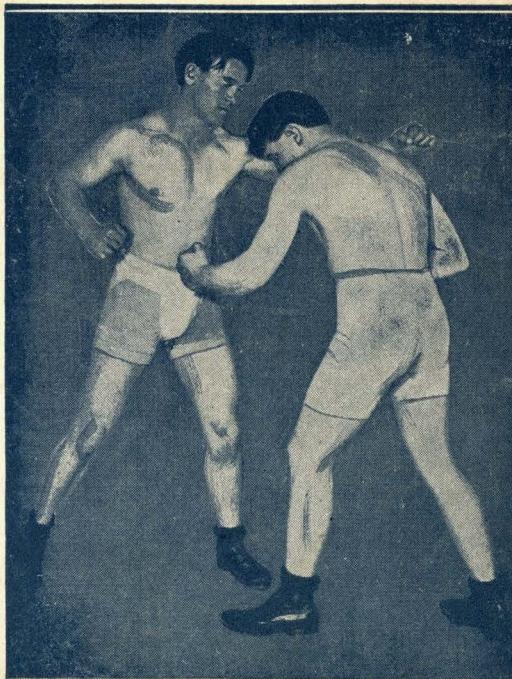
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